THE

RELIGION OF THE AFRICANS.

BY THE

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PREFACE.

"When records are wanting, and tradition is grown a blind matter concerning the origin of a people, all that can be done in it is to compare that tradition, together with their customs and institutions, with the histories, institutions, and customs of other nations, and fix it, if nothing shall hinder, where the parity most appears."

Thus writes Peter Kolben, a German traveller, at the commencement of the 18th century, in his book on "The Present State of the Cape of Good Hope," wherein he gives a particular account of the Hottentots.

I am not concerned with the origin of the Africans, but in setting forth their religion in order to indicate the source from whence it has been derived, and to show that it is in harmony with the beliefs of the rest of mankind, I thought to pursue the course indicated by Kolben; but I soon discovered that, though interesting in itself, such a method of proceeding was far from satisfactory.

There are, it is well known, traditional beliefs amongst nations widely sundered, and between whom there is no historical connection, concerning God,

the Creation of the World, the Creation of Man, the Immortality of the Soul, the Temptation and Fall, the Deluge, &c., which, though so divergent in detail, so distorted by wild imagination, are yet so alike in their general features as to afford good reason for concluding that they have a community of origin. That the Africans have a fundamental affinity with all other races of men upon an authority far higher than that which the undoubted possession of common traditions would give them, I do not doubt; and that they have beliefs which are the relics of the primitive faith professed by the undivided human race, I fully believe, yet it appeared to me so difficult to prove this conclusively, in the way Kolben suggests, that I resolved to content myself with simply recording such information on the religious beliefs of the Africans as I had at my disposal.

Take as an illustration of this difficulty the belief in God. Maitland says,[1] "'I believe that the theology of the world clearly and unequivocally embraced the doctrine of a Supreme Deity, that the 'Catholic tradition' of mankind cried always, 'I believe in God the Father Almighty;' and that 'the great, pregnant, imperative idea of a Supreme power, man's Creator, ruler, and judge, call it Saturn, or Jupiter, or Fate, or what you will, reigned paramount in the minds of men, and in the Catholic tradition which they passed on from generation to generation, even after they had been given up to idolatry and the worship of false gods.'"

I believe that, also, and hold that the nations of

[1] "Essay on False Worship," p. 80.

the world knew God, not because certain natural phenomena may have suggested the idea of God to their minds, but because God in the beginning made a direct revelation of Himself to man. And yet when you examine the idea which the Africans have of God, you cannot help seeing that the argument which Mr. Taylor[1] uses against the general prevalence of the belief in a future state of life for man being conclusive in favour of its being inherited from a common source, might be applied with equal force against this idea of God being a survival, and in favour of the opinion that it may have sprung up independently amongst them in virtue of the natural laws of mental growth.

The difficulty in arriving at the religious beliefs of the Africans is great. (1) They have no "Record, nor writing, nor notion of either." Their traditions live from mouth to mouth. Such have evidently undergone much change as they have descended from generation to generation, and they vary considerably in important particulars amongst the different tribes. (2) The Africans are very reticent upon their religious beliefs and customs. Until their confidence is gained,—and it is rarely that travellers stay sufficiently long with any tribe to gain its confidence,—they will keep what they know and do as secret as they can. When questioned on their religion they will give evasive answers, and rather than divulge their beliefs to strangers they will prefer to be considered fools, or as utterly ignorant of any sort of

[1] "Researches into the Early History of Mankind," p. 5.

religious belief and practice. Consequently our information on such subjects is derived almost entirely from such tribes as have been brought under the influence of missionaries, or who have lived for some length of time in the neighbourhood of European colonists. It would be more satisfactory if our information was derived from wider sources, yet I think that in all essential features it will be found that the information which we possess affords a fair example of what the Africans generally believe.

It may not be out of place to allude here to two facts which serve to show that the Africans must have separated from the main body of the human race at a very early period in the history of mankind, inasmuch as this fact may account for the crude character of their religious ideas, viz., their ignorance of writing, already mentioned, and their ignorance of any sort of architecture in brick and stone.

It is, I know, assumed by some that the antediluvians possessed a considerable knowledge of both these arts, and that Noah was perfectly acquainted with them, and that, consequently, there has never been a period since the Deluge when mankind was ignorant of them. I doubt, however, the correctness of this assumption. It is true that Josephus makes mention of "the letters of Seth;" that Pliny says, "As for letters, they have been from the beginning;" and that other learned men in ancient and modern times have thought that letters, and even sciences, were taught before the Deluge. Yet in face of the fact that the earliest specimens of writing have been shown to belong to a period long after that which can be assigned

to the Deluge, and that it has never been proved that any people once possessed of the art of writing has ever absolutely lost it, I think we may fairly conclude that when the Africans broke away from the parent stem of mankind, writing was an unknown art. To my mind, it is far more reasonable to come to such a conclusion, than to imagine that they knew of its existence, were, in common with the rest of their fellow creatures, proficient in it, and yet there should be not a vestige of such knowledge to be found amongst them.

That the knowledge of the art of architecture before the period assigned to the fact which is known as the Dispersion rests on evidence upon which there can be no doubt; but that this knowledge existed before the Deluge, seems to me to be by no means certain. The passage in Holy Scripture which is principally relied upon to prove that it did exist, is,—"And Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and bare Enoch; and he builded a city, and called the name of the city after the name of his son Enoch." But to apply to that word *city* the modern idea associated with it, and then to infer that Cain was conversant with the art and science of architecture, as we understand the term, is a method of argument opposed to all the knowledge which we possess upon the primitive habitations of mankind. At what period after the Deluge architecture, properly so called, was employed, I do not know, but between that great event and the creation of the earliest specimens of architecture with which we are acquainted, there was, I believe, a much longer

space of time than is generally imagined, during which men lived in tents, and huts such as the Africans now build, and caves of the earth, and houses hewn out of the solid rocks. It seems most improbable that if the Africans had been acquainted with any other form of dwelling, they should not have made use of their knowledge; but throughout Africa, save where foreigners have obtained a footing in the land, you find no building corresponding in any way in its material and structure to the earliest architectural efforts of Assyria and Egypt, and no trace amongst the Africans that they were originally possessed of the art of erecting such buildings.

I do not, however, think that when men were ignorant of these and other arts they were necessarily degraded savages. The perfection of man consists in moral excellence rather than in extensive knowledge, and when man, as did Adam in the day of his innocence, communed with God, though he may have been an uncivilized being, as we regard civilization, yet he, far more than we, was in sympathy with the Holy Angels, and his heart, far more than our hearts, was attuned to righteousness.

But the Africans have not only remained ignorant of what now constitutes human greatness, they have also failed in maintaining the standard of life which they occupied before they broke away from the great centre of the human race. In all their institutions you can perceive signs of this degradation; although it may also be observed that, even in the worst features of their religion, those which afford the most terrible examples of the debasing effects of sin, some

relic of the primitive good still remains, which, rightly used, may enable them the more readily to receive the truth as it is in Jesus, and thus to regain communion with God, and to obtain a spiritual perfection not less than that which Adam had in the days of his innocence.

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CHAPTER I.

CONCERNING GOD.

"I BELIEVE in God,"—an uncreated Supreme Spiritual Being, is the creed which underlies all else that the Africans believe. This belief is not elaborated into a grand conception of God such as that we have. They do not regard Him as the Creator, the Preserver, and the Ruler of all things. They do not credit Him with the attributes of justice, holiness, and love. In so far as they have the power to appreciate goodness, they look upon Him as good; as gifted with power to influence the forces of nature; and as willing, under certain circumstances, to exercise that power in their behalf. He is not always in all their thoughts. Except on rare occasions, they do not worship or honour Him in any way. "God is good," say they, "and will do well, let us honour Him or not." Nevertheless, in seasons of great distress they will sometimes invoke His aid. When in danger of famine from drought, for instance, some, at least, of them offer prayers and make vows to God, and en-

deavour to conciliate His favour by sacrifices and oblations. It is probable that invocations on such occasions are more wide-spread than is generally believed.

I know, from personal inquiries amongst them, that the Manganja, the Waiou, the Anguru, the Nungwi, and some other tribes in the Zambezi districts, and on the Shire Highlands, believe in the existence of a Supreme Being, whom they call by different names according to their dialect, but to whom they assign no evil attribute, and around whom, therefore, no impure tradition or debasing worship has gathered. If great danger from famine or war threaten them, they offer prayer to God to deliver them from it. I saw an instance of this which, though it has been published elsewhere,[1] may fitly be reproduced here.

Soon after I and other missionaries arrived at Magomero, on the Shire Highlands, there was an assemblage of the natives of the district for the purpose of prayer to *Mpambi*, the name by which the Manganja distinguish God, because the clouds withheld their rain, and a famine appeared to be imminent. The chief marched at the head of his people to the appointed place of worship, a plot of ground outside the village, which had been cleared of the bush and fenced in, and in which a hut had been erected that was called the prayer hut. Women as well as men took part in this act of worship, and when all had entered the enclosure and arranged

[1] "Story of the Universities' Mission to Central Africa."

themselves in due order, a woman, who acted as priestess on this occasion, stood forth. In one hand she had a small basket containing Indian corn meal, in the other a small earthern pot containing pombi, the native beer. She went into the hut, not so far but that she could be seen and heard, and knelt down. She put the basket and the pot on either side of her; then she took up a handful of meal and dropped it on the floor, and while doing this, cried out, "Imva Mpambi, Adza mvula!" (Hear thou, O God, and send rain!) To this the people responded by clapping their hands softly, and singing "Imva Mpambi!" (Hear thou, O God!). This form of prayer was repeated until the meal was expended, and the pombi was poured out on to the floor of the hut; after which the woman came out of the hut, closed and fastened the door, and then threw herself on her back. The people followed her example, and while in this position they clapped their hands, and shouted "Imva Mpambi!" for some time. Then they stood up, clapped hands again, bowed themselves repeatedly, and afterwards danced round the chief, who sat at some distance apart by himself, like maniacs.

When the dance ceased, a large jar of water was placed before the chief, wherein the priestess first of all washed her hands, arms, and face; then water was poured over her by another woman; after which all the women rushed forward with calabash cups in their hands, and, dipping them into the water, threw it into the air with loud cries and wild gesticulations. This was the only apparent

result of a belief in God amongst the tribes with whom I became acquainted that came under my notice.[1]

For some time it was thought that the Zulu Kaffir tribes were atheists, but I think it can now be shown that though shorn of all practical religious power, they have a confused belief in the existence of a Supreme Being. Much of the uncertainty which prevails as to what these people really believe with respect to God is caused by the fact that they occasionally apply to him names which are identified with a human being. *Unkulunkulu*, for instance, is the name given to the first man, who is regarded as having been created, not begotten, and yet they frequently speak of *Unkulunkulu* as though he was the first cause of all things, the Eternal Originator, instead of a created being. This led some to conclude that these tribes are without any idea of a being who is divine. But their belief in a "Lord of Heaven," to whom until lately they gave no other name, though unaccompanied by any knowlege of the real attributes of Deity, proves that they have a faith that is not altogether earthbound. Bishop Callaway, who has done much to reduce the religious beliefs of these people to a system by collecting and

[1] It would almost seem that in some respects their ideas had become degenerated; for Father Santos, in his "History of Eastern Ethiopia," which was first published in Paris in 1684, says that the natives of this region have a clear idea of God, whom they call *Molungo* (the name now given to the Supreme Being by the Waiou), "who, both in this world and the next, measures retribution for the good and evil done in this."

classifying their traditions, was told by Ukoto, a very old Izulu :— [1]

"When we were children it was said, 'The Lord is in heaven.' We used constantly to hear this when we were children. They used to point to the Lord on high. We did not hear his name, we only heard that the Lord is on high. We heard it said that the Creator of the World is the Lord which is above. When I was growing up it used to be said, 'The Creator of the World is above.' People used always to point to heaven."

Ubebe, another old man, belonging to the Amantanja tribe, thus replied to the Bishop's inquiry as to his knowledge of God :—

"The chief inquires, then, what our forefathers believed. The primitive faith of our fathers was this,—they said, 'There is *Unkulunkulu*, who is a man, who is of the earth.' And they used to say, 'There is a Lord in heaven.' When it hailed and thundered, they said, 'The Lord is arming, he will cause it to hail; put things in order, cattle and corn.'

"And when the Lord played by thundering, they said, if there was any one afraid, 'Why do you start because the Lord plays? What have you taken which belongs to him?'

"If lightning struck cattle the people were not distressed. It used to be said, 'The Lord has slaughtered for Himself among his own food. Is it yours? Is it not the Lord's? He is hungry; He kills for Himself.' If a village is struck with lightning, and a

[1] "Religious System of the Amazulu," pp. 50 and 56.

cow killed, it is said, 'This village will be prosperous.' If a man is struck, and dies, it is said, 'The Lord has found fault with him.' As to the source of being, I know that only which is above, which gives life to men; for men are satisfied, and do not die of famine, for the Lord gives them life, that they may live prosperously on the earth, and not die of hunger. If it does not rain, the heads of villages and petty chiefs assemble, and go to a black chief. They converse and pray for rain. Their praying is this: The heads of villages select some black oxen, there is not one white among them. They are not slaughtered, they merely mention them; one is killed, the others are left. It was said, at first, the rain comes from the Lord, and the sun came from Him; and the moon which gives a white light during the night, that men may go and not be injured."

Black cattle are, it is supposed, chosen on such occasions, because when it is about to rain the sky is overcast with dark clouds. When the ox is killed its flesh is eaten in the house, and perfect silence is maintained till the whole is consumed, in token of humble submission to the Lord of Heaven, from whom, and not from the chief, the rain is asked. The bones are burnt outside the village. After eating the flesh in silence a song is sung; it is a song without words, consisting merely of musical sounds.

From this it would seem that the Zulus not only believe in the existence of a Supreme Being, who made the sun and the moon, and who also giveth

rain, but that they also pay Him worship in order to gain His benefits.

The Zulu Kaffirs, though they recognized the Lord of Heaven, gave to Him in olden times, as I have said, no proper name. The word *Utikxo* was adopted for God by the early missionaries among the frontier Kaffirs, and gradually found its way amongst other sections of this race. It is supposed to have been derived from the Hottentots, whose word to designate the Divine Being is *Gounja Ticquoa*.

Dr. Moffat, Dr. Bleek, and Bishop Callaway do not doubt that the word *Utikxo* was unknown to the Kaffirs until it was introduced by the missionaries, and that it has been derived from the Hottentots. In the language of the Amazulu it has no meaning beyond that which it gains from being associated with the "Lord of Heaven"; but with the Hottentots, according to Kolben, it signified the God of gods.

Ulangene, an old native, gave the following explanation of the way in which *Unkulunkulu*, the first man, became to be confounded with *Utikxo*, the Lord of Heaven :—

"*Unkulunkulu* means the first man, who was created by *Utikxo* first. And men saw him. *Utikxo* was concealed by *Unkulunkulu*, and was seen by no one ; and because men saw *Unkulunkulu* they said he was the Creator of all things. They said this because they did not see Him who made *Unkulunkulu*. And so they said *Unkulunkulu* was God." [1]

But though the Amazulu have this belief in a heavenly Lord, it would seem that they regard Him

[1] "Religious System of the Amazulu," p. 64.

as an impersonal power, rather than as a personal being; and in their sayings about Him, beyond crediting Him with a vague creative power, there is, according to Bishop Callaway, scarcely any notion of a deity to be discovered, that is, I presume, according to our idea of Deity.

With respect to the Basutos, and other Bechuana tribes, there is some conflict of opinion upon their idea of God. Dr. Moffat, after living amongst the Bechuanas for years, thus records his impression of their religious beliefs :—

"During years of apparently fruitless labour, I have often wished to find something by which I could lay hold in the minds of the natives—an altar to an unknown God, the faith of their ancestors, the immortality of the soul, or any religious association; but nothing of this kind ever floated in their minds. 'They looked on the sun,' as Mr. Campbell very graphically said, 'with the eyes of an ox.' To tell them, the gravest of them, that there was a Creator, the governor of the heavens and the earth, of the fall of man, of the redemption of the world, the resurrection of the dead, and immortality beyond the grave, was to tell them what appeared to be more fabulous, extravagant, and ludicrous than their own vain stories about lions, hyenas, and jackals."[1]

The French missionary, Casalis, says of the Basutos in particular, and of the South African tribes generally, that they had entirely lost the idea of a Creator.[2]

[1] "Missionary Scenes and Labours in South Africa," p. 244.
[2] "The Basutos," p. 238.

Arbousset, another French missionary, implies almost the same thing, for he affirms that "They have scarcely retained the idea of a Supreme Being." Although he afterwards admits that it "would not be difficult to find amongst them some theists."[1]

Nevertheless it has been, I think, satisfactorily ascertained that, apart from the knowledge which has been imparted by Europeans, the Basutos have an idea of God, not unlike that which the Zulu Kaffirs have of a Heavenly Lord. Even Arbousset admits this, for he says of them:—

"When it thunders every one trembles. If there are several together, one asks the other with uneasiness, 'Is there any one amongst us who devours the wealth of others?' All then spit on the ground, saying, 'We do not devour the wealth of others.' If a thunderbolt strikes and kills one of them, no one complains, none weep; instead of being grieved, all unite in saying that the Lord is delighted (that is to say, He has done right), with killing that man; they say, also, that the thief eats thunderbolts, that is to say, does things which draw down upon men such judgments. There can be no doubt, they suppose, that the victim in such a case must have been guilty of some crime, of stealing most probably, a vice from which very few of the Bechuanas are exempt, and that it is on this account that fire from heaven has fallen upon him."[2]

Casalis also remarks that among the Basutos, if any one be struck dead by lightning, no murmur is

[1] "Exploratory Tour in South Africa," p. 69.

[2] Ib. p. 323.

heard, and tears are suppressed. "The Lord has killed him," they say, "he is doubtless rejoicing; let us be careful not to disturb his joy."[1]

The Baroling, who, like the Basutos, are one of the several tribes that are collectively called Bechuana,—*i.e.*, those who are like one another, regard God as a beautiful person, having only one leg (emblematic of unity), and thoroughly just and beneficent. His name is always listened to with respect.

The Rev. G. Mitchell, who has lived for some years amongst the Baroling, in reply to my inquiries, says, "As showing that the Bechuana have a belief in God as distinct from the world of spirits, I may mention a short prayer of theirs, *e.g.*, 'O God of my father who has gone on high to Thee, he is lying at rest with Thee;' also the reverence with which they mention the name of God, and a common form of an oath, which translated is, 'May God kill me,' *i.e.*, meaning, if it is not as the speaker affirms it is.

"When they worship Him, *i.e.*, pray to Him, which is very seldom indeed, only on the death of some one, or when in distress, they will fall on their knees with their face towards or on the ground.

"Strictly speaking, I do not think any attribute is used of God by them, inferentially, however, it might be so; *e.g.*, they look to him for the rain; and to some one who *must* have stolen a thing, they say, 'You cannot blame God for it.' I have never heard them say anything which would lead me to suppose that they ever think of God as seriously taking any active

[1] "The Basutos," p. 242.

part in the affairs of the world; on the other hand I do not know that they do not."

There is no proof that these ideas respecting a Supreme Being have been imported by the Bechuana from Europeans; it is not, however, unlikely that their original belief has been, to some extent, expanded, that they have adopted as their own what was originally no portion of their creed. They, however, insist that their present conception of God has existed from time immemorial amongst them.

When Kolben knew the Hottentots, unless he was greatly mistaken, of which, be it said, there is no proof, they had a far-reaching idea of God.

"I am fully satisfied," says he, "from a thousand inquiries I made among the Hottentots, and from a thousand declarations they made to myself that they believe in a Supreme Being, the Creator of heaven and earth, and of everything in them; the Governor of the world, in whose almighty power all things live and move and have their being; and that he is endowed with unsearchable attributes and perfections. The Hottentots call Him *Gounja Gounja*, or *Gounja Ticquoa*, that is, the God of Gods, and they say he is a good man, who does nobody any hurt, and from whom none need be apprehensive of any, and that he dwells far above the moon." [1]

Another authority thus describes the Hottentot religion sixty years ago:—

"They have no divine worship, and few, if any, religious ceremonies, and, in their savage state,

[1] "Present State of the Cape of Good Hope," vol. i. p. 94.

appear a very stupid race, almost void of the power of reflection and reason, without any knowledge of divine subjects, but a vague notion that there is one great Lord of all, and likewise an evil spirit, a devil.

"They are said to observe an annual festival on the day when the seven stars appear, which happens at the beginning of summer. As soon as they become visible, the parents wake the children and take them into the field to show them the stars. All the inhabitants of the kraal then meet together to dance and sing. They sing words to the following effect: 'O Ticquoa, Thou Father over our heads, give us rain, that all our fruits may ripen, and we may have food in plenty. Grant us a good year, that we may not be obliged to rob the white people, nor they come to kill us.'"[1]

It is the fashion to question the statements of old travellers upon the religious beliefs of the natives whom they visited, and there can be no question that the beliefs of the present representatives of such people are not always in harmony with the descriptions which such travellers gave of them: but it must be borne in mind that the experience of many tribes since they were first visited by Europeans, has tended to the destruction of many of their original beliefs and customs.

The Bosjeman, or Bushmen, are, there is good reason for thinking, the original inhabitants of South Africa, who were all but exterminated by the invading Hottentots. They appear to have been a quiet, in-

[1] "Historical Sketches of the Missions of the United Brethren." John Holmes. P. 381.

telligent, and well-disposed people, but being deprived of their land, robbed of their cattle, and compelled to live like wild beasts in the woods and mountains, they have become more brutes than men. That they should have forgotten many of their religious beliefs and usages is not, therefore, surprising. It would seem, however, that they have retained some sense of a heavenly power.

The son of the chief of the Bushmen that lived in the neighbourhood of the Moravian Station at Genadendal, became a Christian, and he gave the following account of the religious ideas of his countrymen :—

"They perform a kind of religious worship to two rocks, the one representing a male, and the other a female. When going out to hunt they implore the aid of these deities to provide them with food. First they go to the male rock, and strike it with a stick ; if it sounds they believe the report is heard in *heaven*, and they will have success ; but if they get nothing, they repair to the female rock, which they think is inhabited by a malicious spirit, and beat it well, upbraiding it, saying : 'Why do you by your hidden arms cause all the game to be shot dead so that we can find none.'"[1]

Here, then, is certainly an intimation of a belief in the existence of a higher, and, probably, a divine power in heaven.

Arbousset says of the faith of the Mountain Bushmen :—"They believe that there is a *Kaang*, or chief, in the sky, called also *Kue-Akeng-teng*, the man, that

[1] "Historical Sketches of the Missions of the United Brethren," p. 383.

is to say, the master of all things. According to their expression :—'One does not see him with the eyes, but knows him with the heart.' He is to be worshipped in times of famine and before going to war, and that throughout the whole night, performing the dance of the *Mokoma*, *i.e.*, He that is in heaven."[1]

Bishop Callaway, when on a visit to the Griquas, met several persons who were acquainted with the Bushmen, and understood their language, and from them he learnt that their word for God was *Ikqum'u*, and that the meaning of that word was, *Father who is above.*

The Balonda, the most numerous of all the south-western sections of the African race, and who, as yet, are scarcely touched by a foreign influence, appear to have throughout their various clans a clearer idea than most other tribes of a Supreme Being, whom they call by different names according to their dialects. They are said to believe that He rules over all other spirits and minor deities, just as their king rules over the greater and lesser chiefs.

In Western Africa the operations of the slave trade, the influences of Mohammedanism, intercourse with European colonists, and the teaching of Christian missionaries, have tended to obliterate the primitive beliefs of the natives, either by destroying them without giving anything in return, or by substituting for them a faith in God foreign to their original ideas.

Mr. Monteiro has lately drawn a sad picture of the present condition of the natives of Angolo and the

[1] "Exploratory Tour in South Africa," p. 261.

Congo, which serves to show the destructive influence of the slave trade, and foreign misrule. According to him they have "No idea of a Creator, or of a future existence."[1] But Father Merolla, a Capuchin missionary, who worked amongst the ancestors of these people in the 17th century, says of them:— "It would seem, indeed, that they are not ignorant of a Supreme Being, and they also appear to acknowledge the immortality of the soul after its separation from the body."

Other travellers confirm this statement, and there can be no reasonable doubt that the people of Angolo and the River Congo had far higher views with respect to certain religious beliefs in days gone by than they now hold, if we accept Mr. Monteiro's statement of their present condition as correct.

The rule of the Portuguese has tended to obliterate all but the lowest forms of superstition from the minds of the natives. In this they have proved themselves to be worse than the Mohammedans, for in Senegambia, and other regions of Western Africa where the Mohammedans have power, the conception of God amongst the natives has become brighter and clearer.

With the view of comparing the present beliefs of the natives of West Africa with those which they held in the past, I have looked through several volumes of travel during the 17th and 18th centuries, and by every traveller I find the West African tribes credited with a belief in a Supreme Being.

[1] "Angolo and the River Congo," vol. i. p. 247.

Bosman, a Dutchman, says of them: "It is certain that they have a faint idea of the true God, and ascribe to Him almighty and omnipotent attributes. They do not pray to Him, or offer sacrifices, as they say He is too exalted to care Himself about mankind."

The Abbe Proyart, another old missionary, also declares: "They acknowledge a Supreme Being, who, having no origin, is Himself the origin of all things. They believe that He has created all that is fine, all that is good in the universe; that being by nature just, he loves justice in others, and severely punishes fraud and perjury. They call Him *Zambi;* they take His name in testimony of the truth; and they regard perjury as one of the greatest crimes; they even pretend that a species of malady called *Zambi-a-n-pongon*, is the punishment of it; and they say when they are attacked with it, 'there's a perjured man.'"[1]

Barbot affirms that they "acknowledge a Supreme Being, though their idea of Him is vague; and attribute to Him infinite power, universal knowledge, omnipresence, and goodness."

The people of Sierra Leone owned but one God, the maker of heaven and earth. They called the Supreme God *Canou*, and regarded Him as an avenger of crimes, and they took Him for a witness to the sincerity of their words.

On the Gambia the people were found to have a belief in God whom they called *China.* And Barbot

[1] "History of Loango, Kakongo," &c. (Pinkerton's Collection).

describes an act of worship paid to God, of which he was an eye-witness. At the commencement of the rice sowing season chief and people went in procession, carrying ears of rice and honey, to the temple of *China*, who was represented by an idol. The rice was presented to the idol, the honey burnt before him, and then the people prayed aloud to God to give a blessing to their harvest.

Mungo Park says: "Some of the religious opinions of the negroes, though blended with weakest cruelty and superstition, are not unworthy attention. I have conversed with all ranks and conditions upon the subject of their faith, and can pronounce, without the smallest shadow of doubt, that the belief in one God, and of a future state of rewards and punishments, is entire and universal amongst them. It is remarkable that the Pagan nations do not think it necessary to offer up prayers and supplications to the Almighty. They represent the Deity, indeed, as the Creator and preserver of all things; but, in general, they consider Him a being so remote, and of so exalted a nature, that it is idle to imagine the feeble supplications of wretched mortals reverse the decrees and change the purposes of unerring wisdom."[1]

Indeed, there is scarcely a pioneer of travel in Western Africa who does not bear witness to the fact of a belief in God on the part of the nations. Everywhere from beneath the thick cloud of fearful superstitions, there flashed upon them occasional gleams of the face of God, occasional only, it is true,

[1] Original edition, p. 271.

and productive of no apparent good result. As it is now in other parts of Africa, so was it in days gone by in the West, the natives believed in the existence of a heaven Lord, but such belief had no real influence in their lives; they, as a rule, built Him no temples, paid Him no kind of worship; they lived on with an epicurean indifference to everything but the immediate pleasure of the hour; for though they may have credited Him with goodness, they knew not that they should strive to imitate it.

That a belief in the existence of a Supreme Being still exists amongst some of the West African people there is no reason to doubt.

According to Skertchley, "The Dahoman religion consists of two parts totally distinct from each other. First, the belief in a Supreme Being; and, second, the belief in a whole host of minor deities.

"The Supreme Being is called *Mau*, and is invested with unlimited authority over every other being, both spiritual and carnal. He is supposed to be of so high a nature as to care very little for the circumstances of man, and his attention is only directed to them by special invocations."[1]

He is supposed to reside far above the sky, and to commit the care of earthly affairs to lesser deities. He is said to be in every respect an anthropopathical deity, having His likes and dislikes, and yet with characteristic inconsistency the Dahomans deny the corporeal existence of the deity, while ascribing to Him human passions.

[1] "Dahomey as It Is." J. H. Skertchley. Pp. 461, 465.

According to Burton, and he does but affirm what Barbot said many years ago, the Dahomans ascribe thunder to the Supreme Being; and, like the Zulu-Kaffirs, they do not regard it as a sign of His anger, but as an indication that He is taking His pleasure, in a way in which Jupiter was thought to indulge.

Burton also says of the Egbas, the people that occupy the country known as Abbeokuta, or Abeokuta, as he calls it :—"With gods many and lords many, and a considerable mixture of idolatry, they have a distinct name for a Creator. They call Him *Olorun*, an abbreviation of *O li Orun*, Lord or owner of the sky or firmament. It might also be translated, 'Lord of Ghostland;' *Oki Orun*, 'Hill Ghostland,' being Anglicanised, heaven, as opposed to *Orun Akpadi*, which some translate, 'Crucible Hades,' *i.e.*, hell. He is also known as *Eleda*, the Creator; *Olo-Damare*, the ever righteous, the glorious High One. These, however, are palatable attributes of a vague being without personality, and without objectivity; at best, the name is used like the Hindu Pariah employs the word *Bhagwan*, Deity, whilst he worships some low incarnation which he considers inferior in dignity to a live Brahmin."[1]

The information which we possess of the religious beliefs of the tribes in the interior is scanty and imperfect. In Barth's five volumes there are scarcely five pages devoted to this subject, and, so far as he informs us to the contrary, the heathen tribes with whom he came in contact might be destitute of any belief in God.

[1] "Abeokuta and the Cameroons Mountains," vol. i. p. 180.

Sir Samuel Baker was not so incurious upon the religious faith of the people whose acquaintance he made, but having failed to convince a somewhat brutalized individual of the truth of the resurrection of the body, a truth that caused even the philosophers of Athens to turn with contempt from St. Paul, he seems to have come to the conclusion that the various tribes inhabiting the Nile regions are unmitigated materialists.

Speke and Grant give interesting details of certain superstitions, but of belief in God they scarcely make mention.

Schweinfurth, while acknowledging his incapacity, on account of his ignorance of their language, and the suspicion with which he was regarded by the natives in consequence of his being associated with slave dealers, nevertheless declares that the Monbuttoo, a cannibal branch of the Niam Niam, believe in the existence of a Supreme Being, whom they call *Noro*, and whom they regard as a heaven God.[1]

Livingstone once told me that he thought some sort of belief in a Supreme Being prevailed throughout Africa.

It may be, as Baring-Gould observes, that :—"In this conception (of God) there is no personality, no antagonism, and the life of the savage who holds this view is unruled by any moral code, unkindled by any hope of social or individual progress. He has no thought but for his day; his motives are drawn from his present necessities, he knows no past, cares for

[1] "Heart of Africa," vol. ii. p. 120.

no future, lives only for the present, and that a present of animal appetites."[1]

But the Africans are not the monopolists of this condition; and few races, probably, have escaped it, at some portion of their career. When Moses was commissioned to deliver the Israelites from the bondage of Egypt, I question if their ideas of God were much more exalted than that of the Africans; for signs and wonders, both in Egypt and in the wilderness, and a religious ceremonial adapted to its purpose by more than human wisdom, were needed to teach them what were the attributes of God.

Connected with belief in God are the traditions of the creation of the world, and of man, and of the origin of death.

The ideas of most heathen nations concerning the creation of the world and of man, &c., are found in traditions in which, though there be no great uniformity, there are some features in common. Almost all cosmogonies commence with a chaos, or with a mundane egg; and darkness, it is said, preceded light. These traditions are not confined to nations which represent the ancient civilizations, they are met with also amongst barbarous races scarcely removed from the condition of savages. In the Polynesian mythology there is a magnificent legend called "The Children of Heaven and Earth," which, though relating to the origin of the human race, describes chaos, the primæval darkness, the separation of the heavens from the earth, and the creation

[1] "The Origin and Development of Religious Beliefs," p. 239.

of light, with a force of imagination, and a grandeur of imagery equal to the greatest of the cosmogonical myths of the more civilized races.

The Africans are not without traditions which relate to the creation of the world, and of men, &c., yet such traditions are destitute of many of the features which are almost common to the legends of other races of men, and are not generally diffused.

With respect to the creation of the world itself, all that the Zulus seem to know,—and we are better acquainted with their knowledge on this subject than with that of any other tribe, is, that it was in existence before man, and that *Unkulunkulu*, the first man, and everything living, had their origin from the earth.

One day Bishop Callaway was conversing with a native on the origin of men, when two men, who were strangers to the Bishop, came up, who, upon hearing what he was talking about, said :—"Are you talking about the origin of men?" Upon being told that such was the case, and asked if they could furnish any information on the subject, the elder of the two made a statement, of which I give the summary :—

Unkulunkulu had his origin in a valley of this world where there was a bed of reeds. He sprang from the bed of reeds, and a woman (a wife) sprang from the same bed of reeds after him. They had but one name, that of *Unkulunkulu;* and men sprang from *Unkulunkulu* by generation. All things, as well as *Unkulunkulu*, sprang from a bed of reeds, everything, both animals and corn, coming into being with Him. He looked upon the sun when it was finished, and said, "There is a torch which shall

give you light, that you may see." He looked on the cattle, and said, "There are cattle, be ye broken off,[1] and let the cattle be your food, eat their flesh and drink their milk." He looked on wild animals, and said, "That is such an animal; that is an elephant, that is a buffalo." He looked on the fire, and said, "Kindle it, and cook and warm yourself, and eat meat when it has been dressed by the fire." He looked on all things, and said, "So-and-so is the name of everything."[2]

Other natives gave the Bishop similar information with regard to the origin of men, all of which declared man to be earth-born, and some of which seemed to recognize a Creator; though *Umvelingangi*, the name given to the primal source of being, is a name, that, through the confounding of the creature with the creator, is sometimes applied to the first man. For instance, an old Izulu said:—

"Thus sprung up a man and a woman. The name of both was *Unkulunkulu*. They sprang from a reed, the reed which is in the water. The reed was made by *Umvelingangi*. He caused grass and trees to grow. He created all wild animals, and cattle, and game, and snakes, and birds, and water, and mountains." This confusion between the Creator and the First Man is not peculiar to the Africans, for in "Christ and other Masters," vol. i. p. 305, Archdeacon Hardwick says:—"As the old traditions

[1] "A simile," says Bishop Callaway, "implying that both men and cattle were existing as young bulbs, ready to separate from the parent bulb."

[2] "Religious System of the Amazulu," p. 39.

of their ancestors were gradually distorted, the Hindus appear to have identified the first man (Manu Swayambhuva) with Brahma himself, of whom, as of the primary cause, he was the brightest emanation; while Satampa, the wife and counterpart of Manu, was similarly converted into the bride of the creative principle itself. Brahma, in other words, was 'confounded with the male half of his individuality.'"

Similar apparent contradictions are to be found in the mythology of other races of men, for in the myth of Prometheus (a man), we find him described as the creator of the human race.

Ugxumela, another Zulu Kaffir, gave the following version of the origin of men, &c. :—"On the first day man was created he said, as to what happened to them in the bed of reeds, that they did not see their own creation. When he and his wife first saw, they found themselves crouching in a bed of reeds, and saw no one who had created them.

"As regards the bed of reeds, on the day they came into being it swelled, and when it had burst they came out. After that there broke out the *Uthlanga* (the great, great mother) of cattle and of all other animals."

Other traditions, differing in character to the foregoing, are to be found here and there amongst the Zulu Kaffirs, such, for instance, as, that men sprang from a stone which was split in two when they came out; and that some men, not all, were belched up by cattle. These are probably owing to the lively fancy of certain individuals, and the pride of others, for it seems that the chiefs and great men object to be

confounded with common folk, and consequently frequently give a marvellous account of their origin. Generally the people ascribe their origin to a reed, or a bed of reeds; and this idea of the origin of all things, secondarily, from the earth, varied by local popular opinion, largely prevails in South Africa.

Casalis says, that amongst the Basutos there is a legend that both men and animals came out of the bowels of the earth by an immense hole, the opening of which was in a cavern, and that the animals appeared first:[1] though another tradition, and one more generally received is, that man sprung up in a marshy place, where reeds were growing.

The Baroling tradition is, that all things created came originally out of a hole in the earth.

Moffat says the same thing with respect to that section of the Bechuanas with whom he lived.

Campbell was told by the old men that there was a great hole in the Marootze country out of which men and cattle first came, and that their footmarks are still to be seen there;[2] and Arbousset records a similar legend.

Finally, Bishop Callaway adds:—"I have never yet met with any native, old or young, of Natal or Zululand, or from any part between Natal and the Cape, who was ignorant of the tradition of *Unkulunkulu*, who came out of the earth, the first man who lived, gave laws to his children, and died."[3]

[1] "The Basutos," p. 240.

[2] "Travels in South Africa," vol. i. p. 306.

[3] "Religious System of the Amazulu," p. 85.

In effect, the people of South Africa say, with Milton :—

> "The Earth obeyed, and straight
> Opening her fertile womb, teemed at a birth
> Innumerous creatures, perfect forms,
> Limbed and full-grown."

Concerning the origin of man, &c., both travellers and missionaries in other parts of Africa must have been very incurious, or generally unfortunate in their inquiries, for they have failed to elicit much information upon it. Where I have met with any statements on this subject they seem to have been derived from Mohammedan or Christian sources, and therefore not applicable to my purpose. Arnold, but without indicating his authority, declares :—"The Yumala negroes teach that Til, the great Creator, cut the knee-caps from the hermaphrodite Venus, and made from them a black and white human pair. Other negro tribes speak of the first woman being called *Iye*, or life."[1]

Such statements, however, add very little to the value of the information which we possess on this subject ; yet, from the similarity which exists between other portions of their religious beliefs, I have no doubt that further investigations amongst the unsophisticated tribes will disclose, that they not only have a belief in the origin of man, &c., but that it is in its main features like unto that which exists amongst the natives of South Africa.

With respect to the origin of white and black men

[1] "Genesis and Science," p. 155.

there are, as might be expected, various legends amongst the Africans.

Palme records the following as existing amongst a heathen tribe in the Soudan. "When our first parents were driven from paradise, the Lord came down from heaven to see if his orders were executed, and to convince Himself that they gained their daily bread by the sweat of their brow. Eve, or as the negroes call her, Hauve, bore daily many hundred children, which she was obliged to show the Abou (God the Father), who sent them into all parts of the world, there to multiply. It happened once that He reproached Hauve, and said He would not have any more of those dark babes, and took them from her and transported them into the present Abyssinia. Shortly after this Hauve brought forth another lot of similar children, which, for fear of Abou, she put into an oven to secrete them; but Abou, on his arrival, had a suspicion of what had transpired, and as he did not receive a satisfactory answer from Hauve respecting the last children, hunted for them everywhere, and found them eventually in the oven. When they crept out of their place of confinement they were all black with soot. Abou, in wrath at this second offence on the part of Hauve, again took away her children, and swore that they should, in commemoration of their mother's crime, remain for ever black as when they emerged from the oven, and that nothing in the world should be capable of wiping off the stain. These children became the original parents of the negroes."[1]

[1] "Travels in Kordofan," p. 187.

But though the traveller is careful to inform us that the people from whom he learnt this legend were not Mohammedans, and clung in all things to their old heathen ways, there is about it such an atmosphere of Mohammedan superstition, that it is difficult to accept it as a primitive legend of the Africans. The genuine African myths are, be it said, generally less offensive in their character.

Of the origin of the white man, the Zulu Kaffirs have no historical tradition. They believe that Unkulunkulu (with all that sprung from him) was black, and they thus account for the white men: The black men came out first from the place whence all nations proceeded, but they came with few things and little knowledge; what they had just enabled them to obtain food and live, and their wisdom only enabled them to help themselves, though, until they became acquainted with the white men, they thought they possessed all things, and were so wise that there was nothing that they did not know. But when they saw the wisdom and the knowledge of the white men, they no longer said all men came out of the place of origin together, but that the white men remained behind and obtained very much more than they possessed from the great Itongo (Spirit). The white men came out with everything that was needed for manhood; they came forth perfect, and not like themselves, who, while boasting in their ignorance that they were wise and possessed all things, were foolish and possessed nothing.[1]

[1] "Religious System of the Amazulu," p. 76.

This idea of the cause of the difference between white and black men is evidently of a recent growth, and is valuable only as showing the working of the native mind when brought in contact with the superiority of Europeans.

The Kordofan legend refers to man's expulsion from Paradise ; but though traditions of Eden, that is, of a Golden Age, when men lived in purity and happiness, form an element in the mythology of other races of men, there are not, in so far as I have been able to ascertain, any well-defined examples of it to be met with in Africa. Kolben, however, says :— "The Hottentots, that is, the most sensible of them," —for with the Africans, as with ourselves, religious knowledge is not universal, a fact which travellers do not always recognize—"believe that their first parents so grievously offended the Supreme God that He cursed them and all their posterity with hardness of heart, so that they knew little of Him, and have still less inclination to serve Him." [1]

He naturally anticipates that such a tradition, so far in advance of, or, at least, so contrary to all that had then been ascertained of the religious belief of the Africans, would meet with but little credence, and he emphatically assures his readers that such a belief did exist amongst the Hottentots, and that he recorded it "without the least addition or improvement of his own, beyond the proper turn of words."

Arnold, but without mentioning from what source he derives his information, says :—"In Yumala a

[1] "Present State of the Cape of Good Hope," p. 95.

tradition exists that because mankind degenerated, the God Til doomed them to destruction, causing them to forfeit their immortality. The Fanti negroes believe that man was not created in the condition in which he now exists, his original happiness being lost by his falling into sin."[1] But in the face of the fact that the Africans, like most other heathens, do not regard sin, according to their idea of sin, as an offence against God, but simply as a transgression of the laws and customs of their country, I think we may safely conclude that the Fantis derived their belief on this subject either from the Mahammedans of the Soudan, by whom they were dispossessed of their original territory in the interior, or from Europeans on the coast.

That there should be no well-authenticated legend of Paradise, and man's expulsion therefrom, amongst the heathen tribes of Africa is somewhat remarkable, because in Egypt there exists amongst its most ancient monuments a record of the events of Paradise, as recorded in Holy Scripture. The Rev. C. Forster has given a description of the central tablet of a large sculpture in the temple of Osiris at Phylæ, which, he says :—"At once tells its own story as, beyond a rational doubt, an Egyptian delineation of the Temptation and Fall of our first parents. Every particular of the Mosaic account is here depicted to the life : the man, the woman, the serpent, the tree, the forbidden fruit, only the fruit was not on the tree, but in the hands of the man

[1] "Genesis and Science," p. 164.

and woman, and upon the serpent's head—a basilisk. standing erect,—as though the sentence 'upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat, all the days of thy life!' had not yet been fulfilled."[1]

From this it is evident that the ancient Egyptians had some legend respecting Man's Fall, or, rather, existence in Paradise and expulsion therefrom, and as the Africans proper formed, according to Herodotus, Diodorus, and others, so large a portion of the Egyptian population as to lead them to credit the Egyptians with the physical characteristics of the negro, it is remarkable that the Africans do not seem to have any knowledge of a subject which must have been well known to the Egyptians. It is possible that the Hottentots may have gained their idea of man's transgression from the Egyptians, for though they occupy the most southern portion of the continent, there seems good reason to believe that they have migrated willingly, or have been forced down from the north. Some of the descriptions of the African people who fought in the armies of Ancient Egypt apply to them more than to any other of the numerous tribes that now people the continent, and their language, it is said, in its structure tends to connect them with the north rather than with the south of Africa.

By some it is thought that Serpent worship refers to the temptation and fall of man. There is no superstition more universal than Ophiolatry. There is hardly a people on earth among whom the serpent

[1] "The Monuments of Egypt," p. 185.

has not been an object either of divine worship, or superstitious veneration, nor is there any system of idolatry now existing which has not this creature amongst its chief idols. This fact affords reason for believing that the serpent is thus distinguished because it has played a prominent part in the history of mankind, although its worshippers may have lost all knowledge of the circumstance which originally prompted their adoration.

Serpent worship, if not general, exists extensively in Africa. Bruce discovered it amongst the Shangalla, a tribe on the northern frontier of Abyssinia. I met with indications of it in East Central Africa. In "Purchas's Pilgrim" we are told that the negroes of Congo worshipped snakes, which they fed with their daintiest provisions. In "Lander's Records of Clapperton's Expedition," it is said:—"The worship of the snake still prevails in Central Africa. Among their idols in a temple of the Yorbueans is one with the image of a snake upon his head, which reminds us of the Egyptian priest with the Asp of Isis."

The most conspicuous instance of snake-worship in Africa, however, is now to be found in Whydah. The snake, which is here made the tutelary deity of the place, is the Danhgbwe, a harmless, brown and pale yellow creature, about eight feet long. The adoration is paid to the living creature, though it is not at all clear that it is regarded as the incarnation of any god.

The *Serpent's House* is the most celebrated temple in the kingdom, and great numbers of the Danhgbwe are there kept and cared for by men and women

devoted to this service. The priests and priestesses of this reptile deity are recruited in a singular manner. The snakes are permitted to leave the temple at will, and they are given to nocturnal wanderings. Should a child be touched by a snake on one of its peregrinations, the priests immediately demand the child from its parents, who have to impoverish themselves to pay for its education in the various ceremonials appertaining to the worship, until the period of probation is passed, and the neophyte, having been duly initiated into its mysteries, is permitted to practise ophiomancy himself.[1]

The penalty for killing a Danhgbwe used to be death, but since Whydah has been incorporated with the kingdom of Dahomey, this has been commuted to a punishment sufficiently severe, but not necessarily fatal. A house is built of dry sticks, and thatched with dry grass; the culprit, after being profusely anointed with palm oil, is put into it. The door is shut, the house is fired, the inmate, if he can, forces his way through the blazing edifice, and rushes to the nearest running stream, followed by the people, who have assembled for the occasion, and who beat and pelt him unmercifully. If he reach the water he is safe from further molestation, but should he fall by the way he is beaten to death.

The ancients credited the serpent with supernatural wisdom, and worshipped it as the divine giver of knowledge not attainable by human power. The Danhgbwe is supposed to have preternatural wisdom, to be omnipotent in procuring the welfare

[1] "Dahomey as It Is," p. 56. Skertchley.

of its devotees, and no undertaking of any importance is commenced without consulting and sacrificing to it.

There is, therefore, some resemblance between serpent-worship in Africa and that of ancient times; and if it be true that "the serpent of Paradise was the serpent-god of the Gentiles," the serpent that tempted Eve may also be the remote cause of the veneration with which the serpent is still regarded in Africa.

Connected with this subject are the traditions on the origin of death.

> "Of man's first disobedience, and the fruit
> Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste
> Brought death into the world, and all our woe,"

the Africans, generally, are ignorant. I do not think that it has ever been clearly ascertained that any section of the Africans do of themselves regard death as a punishment for sin. Yet, on the origin of death, they have various legends, the most remarkable, of which there are several versions, being that which is found in South Africa.

Dr. Bleck gives the following translation of the version which prevails amongst the Hottentots:— "The Moon, it is said, sent once an insect to men, saying, 'Go thou to men, and tell them, "As I die, and dying live, so ye shall also die, and dying live."' The insect started with the message, but whilst on his way was overtaken by the Hare, who asked, 'On what errand are you bound'? The insect answered, 'I am sent by the Moon to men, to tell them that as she dies, and dying lives, they also shall die, and

dying live.' The Hare said, 'As thou art an awkward runner, let me go' (to take the message). With these words, he ran off, and when he reached men, he said, 'I am sent by the Moon to tell you, "As I die, and dying perish, in the same manner ye shall also die, and come wholly to an end."' Then the Hare returned to the Moon, and told her what he had said to men. The Moon reproached him angrily, saying, 'Darest thou tell the people a thing which I have not said?' With these words, she took up a piece of wood, and struck him on the nose. Since that day the Hare's nose is slit."[1]

Old Namaqua Hottentots, therefore, will not eat hare's flesh, but the young men may do so until they are ceremonially admitted to the status of manhood.

The moon, be it said, was, if it be not now, an object of worship amongst the Hottentots. Kolben is very sure of this, and produces the testimony of others in confirmation of his own conviction. He says:—"These dancings and noises, which some travellers regard simply as pastime, are religious honours and invocations to the moon. They call her *Gounja*. The Supreme God they call *Gounja Gounja*, or *Gounja Ticquoa*, the God of gods; and place him far above the moon. The moon with them is an inferior visible God, the subject and the representative of the High and Invisible. They judge the moon to have disposal of the weather, and invoke her for such things as they want. They assemble for the celebration of her worship at full and

[1] "Hottentot Fables" (Bleek), p. 69.

change constantly. No inclemency of the weather prevents them."[1]

The Zulu version of the legend on the origin of death, according to Bishop Callaway, runs thus:—"It is said, *Unkulunkulu* sent for the Chameleon, and said to it, 'Go, Chameleon, go and say, "Let not men die"' (or, tell men they shall not die). The Chameleon set out, but it went slowly, and loitered on the way, eating of the fruit of a tree which is called Ubukwebezane. (A shrub which bears clusters of berries, of a purplish colour and a sweet taste.) At length *Unkulunkulu* sent a Lizard after the Chameleon, when it had been away some time. The Lizard went, and made great haste, for *Unkulunkulu* had said, 'Lizard, when you have arrived, say, "Let men die."' So the Lizard went, and said, 'I tell you it is said, "Let men die."' The Lizard returned to *Unkulunkulu* before the Chameleon had reached his destination. At length it arrived, and shouted, saying, 'It is said, 'Let not men die!"' But men answered, 'Oh! we have heard the word of the Lizard; it has told us that men shall die. We cannot hear your word. Through the word of the Lizard men will die.'"[2]

There is still a lively belief in this tradition amongst the Zulus, who, in consequence, manifest a strong dislike for the lizard, invariably killing it if it come in their way, saying, at the same time:—"Let be! This is the very piece of deformity which ran in the beginning to say that men should die."

[1] "Present State of the Cape of Good Hope," vol. i. p. 97.

[2] "Religious System of the Amazulu," p. 3.

There is, it will be observed, a marked difference in the spirit, if not in the form, of these versions of this legend. In the first instance, the message conveyed a promise of life through death, and was made abortive, not by the action of the god who sent it, but solely through the spontaneous and malicious interference of the hare. In the second case, there is a promise of absolute immunity from death, for which the will of the god, seemingly provoked by the delay of the chameleon, not by any fault of men, substitutes a declaration of death equally absolute.

Of the so-called Flood legends there is scarcely a trace to be found in Africa. Here and there, it is true, the natives have made certain statements, which some suppose refer to the Noachian deluge, but it requires a liberal exercise of the imagination to enable one to accept such a conclusion.

The Hottentots used to say that their first parents came into the country through a window, or door; that the name of the man was Noh, and the name of the woman Hingnoh; that they were sent into their country by God Himself; and that they taught their descendants to keep cattle, and to do a great many things. Kolben thinks that this tradition looks extremely like a fragment of the story of Noah. It may be so, but, nevertheless, I fear he has been led to see a connection where none exists.

Of genuine African traditions concerning the Deluge there seems to be no unquestionable instance in existence. The Yumala people, according to J. M. Arnold, say that the wickedness of men in murdering each other was punished by a great flood,

only one man, Musikden—the Prince of the Mountain—escaping. But this legend is evidently of Mohammedan origin; and out of the range of Mohammedan and European influence, I doubt if you find in Africa any tradition of the Deluge, the Dispersion, or any other kindred subject.

CHAPTER II.

CONCERNING GOOD AND EVIL SPIRITS.

Belief in an intermediate race of beings between deity and humanity is a prominent feature in every religious system of the heathen. Among the early Oriental nations the science of astronomy appears to have been essentially connected with this belief, the heavenly bodies being considered demons, or celestial intelligences, and honoured and worshipped as such. Idolatry and zoolatry are the offspring of this belief; idols and certain beasts being regarded as personifications of some spiritual principle or being, good or evil, to whom homage was due. The symbolic representations, and deification of the human passions and moral virtues grew, I believe, out of this same belief: it being supposed that they were governed and directed by certain spiritual agents, who were, in course of time, ranked as deities, and had temples erected for their worship. Ultimately every phase and feature of nature, everything, indeed, that could be connected with human life, either in this world or in the next, was thought to be under the government or guardianship of one or more of these spiritual beings, to whom religious homage was paid as to divinities; until these "principalities and powers," these "gods many and lords many" may be numbered, as in India, by millions.

In Africa the belief in demons, *i.e.*, the beings that are intermediate between deity and humanity, which are to be distinguished from the disembodied spirits of men, is general and intense. The Africans believe in the existence of God without anxiety, because they think that He is unlikely to do them harm, or to interfere in their affairs in any way, but they regard the world of spirits, by whom they believe themselves to be surrounded, with great anxiety, for they consider them to be evil rather than good; to have both the will and the power to influence and determine their destinies; and they strive, therefore, to propitiate them, or to guard themselves against their malignity. To their imaginations these spirits people the darkness with hideous shapes, poison the light with their presence, sweep over the plains in the forms of wild beasts, fill the forests, inhabit trees, live on the tops of the mountains, and in the secluded recesses of caves and valleys; make their homes in the sea, the lakes, and the rivers; the air is full of them, the earth teems with them, fire is not free from their presence, and human beings are possessed by them. To them, also, they attribute the sorrows and the sufferings, the misfortunes, and, in most cases, the deaths of mankind. But though their belief in this portion of the spiritual world comprises almost every element found in the most elaborated systems of mythology, it is a crude, repulsive, fearful thing; no poetical imagination glorifies it, and, save in some of the western regions, it does not find an outward expression even in idolatry.

It is not easy to reduce to anything like a system the fragmentary information which, from various parts of the continent, we possess on this subject. But that this belief in the spiritual world issues in a terrible Demonolatry, with which many of the seemingly heterogeneous rites of the Africans are connected, I am very sure.

By Demonolatry, I do not, with Dr. Johnson, simply mean the worship of the devil, but the worship of spiritual beings, other than human, who, as tutelary deities, or as characters less amiable, are thought to be the guardians of particular localities and human interests, or the cause of discomfort, misfortune, and death, and whose position, therefore, is somewhat analogous to that of the gods and goddesses, and other spirits less exalted, of more civilized regions.

That such are supposed to exist, and to exercise a potent influence for evil rather than for good, is certain; for almost every traveller in Africa contributes some information which tends to prove it.

Perhaps the crudest form of this phase of belief in the spiritual world prevails amongst the Bongo, a tribe which, in general intelligence, seems to be inferior to all the inhabitants of the regions of the Nile, the Akka, *i.e.* the pigmies, alone excepted. Why this should be is not at all clear; that it is so, all Europeans who have visited them bear witness.

Schweinfurth declares that they "have not the remotest conception of immortality;" that "they have no idea of transmigration of souls, or any doctrine of the kind, than they have of the existence of the ocean; and that beyond the term *loma*, which

denotes equally luck and ill-luck, they have nothing in their language to signify any deity or spiritual being."[1] Yet, in seeming contradiction to this positive statement, he afterwards says: "Quite amazing is the fear which exists among the Bongo about ghosts, whose abode is said to be the shadowy darkness of the woods. Spirits, devils, and witches, have their general appellation of *bitaboh;* wood-goblins being specially called *ronga*. Comprehended under the same terms are all bats, as likewise are owls of every kind; and, besides these, the *Ndori*, a kind of pseudo-simia, with great red eyes and great ears, which drags out a gloomy existence in the cavities of hollow trees. There are, too, prowling beasts of night for which they entertain the utmost dread, regarding them with superstitious awe. Good spirits are quite unrecognized, and, according to the general negro idea, no benefit can come from a spirit at all. They affirm that the only thing they know about spirits is that they do mischief. They assert that there is no other resource for obtaining communication with spirits, except by means of certain roots, which may be of service, likewise, in employing the powers of evil spirits to inflict injury on others."

The Waganda, who live on the northern shores of the Victoria Nyanza, who were first made known to us by Speke and Grant, and of whom M'tesa, an extraordinary man, from whatever point of view he may be regarded, is king, are great believers in the

[1] "The Heart of Africa," vol. i. p. 307.

spiritual world generally; but their special object of veneration and dread is *M'gussa*, a water spirit who lives in the lake, and who wreaks his vengeance upon all who excite his anger. Like the water spirits of the Rhine, this demon is thought to have supreme jurisdiction, not only in the lake itself, but in all the rivers that communicate with it, and so fearful are the Waganda of doing anything that might excite his displeasure, that they would not permit Speke to throw a sounding-line into the water lest perchance he might be offended at it.

M'gussa communicates with the people by means of his own special priest, who lives on an island of the lake, and who is held in nearly as much awe as his master.

Bishop Steere says that, by the natives at Zanzibar, it is believed that "there are an infinite number of spirits which may be called local, having a special haunting-place, though exercising a wide power over the fortunes of men and women. Such a one is *Mwana maua* (child of flowers), a spirit haunting the island of Monfia, and described as a very beautiful woman, who is attended by a very ugly black husband. Such, again, are the spirits called *Muzimu*, and one, at least, of which is supposed to reside in nearly every baobab or calabash-tree."[1]

It seems, however, that *Muzimu* originally described the disembodied spirits of men, as in some African languages *zimu* is used for a departed spirit, and in the Swahili it is sometimes used for *among the dead;*

[1] "Mission Life," April, 1870.

consequently, though not now recognized as such, the veneration with which the *Muzimu* are regarded may be a relic of ancestor-worship.

The religious rites connected with this belief are not, amongst the Africans at Zanzibar, generally sanguinary. On ordinary occasions the fruits of the field are offered in worship, but on great occasions, such as war, famine, or pestilence, a red and a black ox are sacrificed in order to propitiate the local demons. Some say that "a red and a black ox" is merely a euphemism for a white and a black man; but of the truth of this no satisfactory proof has been given.

The Mozambique tribes generally, be it said, are not naturally bloodthirsty or cruel; in war they do not slay their thousands, and in times of peace deeds of violence are almost unknown. Their religious observances, consequently, are not often accompanied by deeds of blood.

They have their tutelary deities, concerning one of whom I gained some information. The Manganja suppose that a spirit, whom they call *Bona*, dwells on the top of a mountain called Choro, and though they regard him with awe, they think him to be a beneficent deity. He is looked upon as the dispenser of peace and plenty, and the giver of wise counsel. He is said to have a visible presence, but, save in dreams, no one is supposed to have seen him. A priestess, not necessarily a virgin, though from the time she is selected she, on pain of death, must eschew the society of men, is devoted to his service; and through her *Bona* communicates with his worshippers. In vulgar language, this woman is spoken of as *Bona's*

wife, and being compelled to live alone on the mountain-top, a wife is often needed for *Bona*, for such an isolation proves speedily fatal to African women.

When the spirit's advice is required, the chief, or his representative, and a retinue of drum-beaters and horn-blowers, and the bearers of the necessary offerings, ascend the mountain. On their approach to the sacred ground, the priestess secludes herself in her hut, in front of which the offerings are laid, and the difficulty requiring the aid of the spirit's counsel to solve, is stated. The people then retire, the priestess proceeds to the hut devoted to *Bona*, who during the night appears to her in a dream, and declares his will with respect to the subject upon which his advice is sought. In the morning the people again resort to the priestess, and hear the message which she has been commissioned to deliver.

This method of obtaining intercommunion with the deities was practised by the ancients, who slept in the temples in the hope of receiving dreams from the gods.

Amongst the Zulu Kaffir tribes ancestor-worship is more common than demonolatry; of the latter worship, indeed, very few instances seem to be known. Demonology, according to the popular idea of it, *i.e.* the means by which men and women have dealings with the agencies of the spiritual world, and become endowed with preternatural powers, is believed in by them implicitly, though whether this world of spirits be composed of demons, or the spirits of human beings, does not at all seem clear. Nevertheless, they believe in the existence of certain spiritual beings

that are not human. *Mkosazana*, the Princess, or Little Chieftainess, is one such. She appeared on the same day that men came out of the earth. The men of primitive times knew her, but no one existing at the present time has seen her. According to the tradition which exists as to her personal appearance, she is an animal as large as a polecat, and is marked with white and black stripes. On one side she represents a bed of reeds, a forest, and grass ; on the other the appearance of a man. When she ever meets with a man she conceals herself, and speaks with him without his seeing her. He hears only a voice which says, "Turn your back ; do not look on me, for I am naked." And the man obeys, because it is said that if a man look on her face to face he will very soon die. She it is who introduces many fashions amongst the people, and changes their customs. She speaks to the man she loves, coming to him by night at his own home, or meeting with him in the fields, telling him her will, and bidding him repeat her words to the people. Her words are never kept secret, for all in whom she confides are afraid to hide them, lest they die. Sometimes she orders all the children to be weaned, and although they are very young she is obeyed ; for the mothers are afraid that if they do not wean them they will surely die. At other times she says, "Let much beer be made and poured out on the mountain." And all the tribes make beer, each chief and his tribe, and do with it as she dictates, and thus free themselves from blame.

Not long ago there lived in Zululand a man named Ubobobo, who troubled the people greatly

by his frequent assertions that the *Mkosazana* had spoken to him, and by the character of his messages. Now he would declare that the *Mkosazana* had said "Let the damsels marry young men, and reject the old"; then he would assert that her command was, "Give the damsels to the old men, and let them reject the young." Nevertheless, his commands, whatever their character might be, were published throughout the land and obeyed, for the people said, "The *Mkosazana* has spoken," and her word is greater than the chief's.

Her messages, however, are not always vexatious, for she is regarded as one that "maketh the grass to grow upon the mountains, and herb for the use of men," &c.; and when there is a drought the people long for her word of healing, and great is the rejoicing when a man comes forward and declares that he has met her in his garden, and that she has said, "This year you shall have food; although for a long time there has been famine, it shall be so no more."

No regular worship is paid to this supernatural being; she lives apart from men in the depths of the forests, and only when she pleases does she speak to them, then she comes to whom she wills, and charges them with her commands.

It is not, however, till we get to the Hottentots that we find belief in a demon who occupies a position somewhat like that which we assign to the devil. In Kolben's time this belief was very lively amongst them, and, I am told, it survives to this day amongst the Namaquas.

After describing what he calls the "propitious side

of their religion," Kolben says:—[1] "They" (the Hottentots) "have but one upon the reverse, and that is the worship of an evil deity, whom they look upon as the father of mischief, and the cause of all their plagues. They call him *Touqúoa*, and say he is a little, crabbed, inferior captain, whose malice against the Hottentots will seldom let him rest, and who never did, nor has it in his nature to do, any good to anybody.

"'Tis this *Touqúoa*, say they, who stirs up enemies against them. 'Tis he who frustrates all their good designs. 'Tis he who sends all pain and vexation. 'Tis he who afflicts them and their cattle with diseases, and sets on wild beasts to devour them. 'Tis he who is the author of all ill-luck. And 'tis he, say they, who teaches the wicked Hottentots the cursed art of witchcraft; by which, they believe, innumerable mischiefs are done to the persons and cattle of the good." They worship him, therefore, "in order to sweeten him and avert his malice. They coax him, upon any apprehension of danger or misfortune, with the offering of an ox or a sheep, and at other times perform divers ceremonies of worship to wheedle and keep him quiet."

Father Tachart, says Kolben, has well described the worship of this spirit of evil in the following words:—"We honour *Touqúoa* at times," say the Hottentots, "by killing a fat ox or a sheep, according to our apprehensions of his designs to plague us. With the

[1] "The Present State of the Cape of Good Hope," vol. i. pp. 104 and 111.

fat we anoint our bodies, and with the flesh we regale one another, this being the way to please or reconcile him to us if we have offended, though we know not how we have offended. He reckons what he pleases an offence, and plagues us when he pleases. And it has been always a custom among us thus to appease him."

Perhaps the most remarkable of the Hottentot superstitions was a belief in a spirit that came to them in the form of a winged insect, about the size of a child's little finger, having a green back, a belly speckled with white and red, and two horns on its head—the *Mantis fausta*. Whenever they saw this creature they paid it the highest tokens of veneration. If it visited a kraal the inhabitants assembled about it in transports of devotion. They sang and danced around it, troop after troop, while it remained with them, in highest raptures. They threw to it the powder of a herb they called buchu (*Spiræa Apii ordorata*), and covered the whole area of the kraal and the tops of the huts with the same preparation. They killed also fat sheep as a thank-offering. And considering the benefits which this insect was supposed to confer upon them, it is not surprising that they paid it this high regard. They believed that it brought them favour and prosperity; that all their past offences were buried in oblivion; and that all their guilt, of whatsoever kind it might be, was purged away.

If this insect alighted on a Hottentot he was looked upon as a man without fault, and distinguished and reverenced as a sacred person ever after. His neigh-

bours gloried that they had such a favoured mortal amongst them, and published the fact far and near. The fattest ox belonging to the kraal was killed as a thank-offering, and all the people kept festival for days. The case was in every respect the same if the insect alighted upon a woman ; she was regarded as a sanctified person, and the delight of the spirit.

Kolben says :—"The Hottentots will run any hazard to procure the safety of this animal, and are cautious to the last degree of giving it the least annoyance."

The son of a German, who had given leave to some Hottentots to turn their cattle upon his land, was amusing himself one day in the kraal, when this insect appeared. The Hottentots immediately ran tumultuously to adore it; while the young German ran to catch it, in order to see what the effect would be amongst them. He seized it in the midst of them. The cry of agony was general when they saw it in his hands. They stared with distraction in their eyes at him and at one another. "See, see, see!" said they; "What is he going to do? Will he kill it?" They were wild through apprehension of its fate. "Why," said he, "do you make such a hideous noise; and why are you in such agony about this paltry creature?" "Ah!" they replied with utmost concern, "It is a divinity. It is come from heaven. It is come on a good design. Do not hurt it; do not offend it. We are the most miserable wretches on earth if you do. This ground will lie under a curse; and the crime will never be forgiven." This was not enough for the young German,

who determined to carry the experiment a little further, and made as though he certainly intended to maim or destroy it. On this the people ran about, and screamed as though they were frantic; they fell prostrate on the ground before him, and with streaming eyes and loudest cries besought him to spare the creature and give it its liberty. Having sufficiently tested the reality of their belief in this insect-god, he let it fly, and they shouted in all the transports of joy.

Kolben adds:—"Discoursing upon this matter myself with the Hottentots of this very kraal, they declared to me, that if this deified insect had been killed, all their cattle would certainly have been destroyed by wild beasts, and they themselves, every man, woman, and child of them, brought to a miserable end. They believe the kraal to be of evil destiny where this insect is rarely seen; and to reason with them against these infatuations is to talk to the wind. They would sooner give up their lives than renounce the least of them."

Amongst the Damaras I have not found any undoubted instances of demonolatry, though certain customs suggest that it exists.[1] For instance, they are subdivided into a number of *eundas*—a word which has some analogy with the Hindu "caste." The people belonging to one *eunda* are called the Sun-children; to another the Rain-children; and so on. Each *eunda* has its peculiar rites and emblems. These emblems are always sprigs of certain

[1] Wood's "Natural History of Man," pp. 346 and 348.

bushes or trees, which represent the *eundas*, just as the red and white roses represented the houses of Lancaster and York. Each of these castes has some prohibited food, and they will almost starve rather than break through the prohibition. One will not eat the flesh of red oxen, another eschews the draught oxen; and so fastidious are they, that they will not touch the vessels in which prohibited food is cooked, nor even stand to leeward of the fire that cooks it, lest the smoke should touch them.

Again, they have a practice which bears a striking resemblance to the sacred fire of the ancients. The hut of the supreme chief is distinguished by a fire which is always kept burning outside the hut in fine weather, and inside during the rain. The duty of watching this fire is confided to the chief's daughter, who is regarded as a priestess, and is called, from her office, *Ondangere*. She performs various rites in virtue of her office, such as sprinkling the cattle with water as they go out to feed, and tying a sacred knot in her leathern apron if one of them dies.

Should the position of the village be changed, she precedes the oxen, carrying a burning brand from the sacred fire, and taking care that it is replaced as occasion requires. If by any accident the fire be extinguished, the lamentations are great. The whole tribe is called together, cattle are sacrificed as expiatory offerings, and the fire is rekindled by friction.

If one of the chief's sons, or a great man of the tribe, should remove from the capital, and set up a village of his own, he is supplied with some of the sacred fire, and commits it to the care of his own

daughter, who becomes the *Ondangere* of the new village.

It is, I think, evident that these customs have their root in a belief that there is a connection between the elements and the spiritual world.

We now come to the regions of Angolo and the Congo, where idolatry abounds, and where all manner of heathen superstitions are as prevalent as though the natives had never been under the power or influence of Europeans, whereas they have for four hundred years been under the rule, real or nominal, of Portugal. That their religious beliefs and customs have not changed in their character, is shown by contrasting the accounts which Father Merolla in 1666, and Barbot in 1746, give of them, with the descriptions of travellers of our own times.

Speaking of their idolatry, Merolla says:—"These people abound so in superstition, that it would scarce be believed by any but those who saw it. Whilst I was here I heard several proclamations made publicly by the wizards, that all thieves and robbers should speedily make restitution, or they would have recourse to their arts to discover them. I saw likewise at a distance an oath administered, which, that it might have the greater efficacy, was proposed and taken in the presence of their idol. This hobgoblin resembled in some measure a mountebank's merryandrew, having a divers-coloured vest on, and a red cap on its head, and standing on a little table. As soon as the company that stood round in a ring saw me, they immediately dispersed, and hid their idol. This they did not out of any fear of us, by

reason that, being pagans, we had no jurisdiction over them, but because (said they) the presence of a priest deprives them of the power of acting. Before the gates of their houses almost all have one of these idols, whereof I have seen some five or six feet high; others are smaller, but both are generally clouterly carved. They place them likewise in the fields, where they are never worshipped, but on account of finding out some theft, for which the thief, when discovered, must die. They that keep idols in their houses, every first day of the moon are obliged to anoint them with a sort of red wood powdered. At the appearance of every new moon, these people fall on their knees, or else cry out, standing and clapping their hands, 'So may I renew my life as thou art renewed!'

"As I was travelling over hills and valleys to transport myself to Congo, I chanced to light upon a place where they were invoking of evil spirits; the place was a poor, wretched, despicable hut, built on a small rising ground; on one side hung two coarse, nasty aprons, which stunk so that they were enough to strike any one down that came near them. In the middle of this hut was a wall raised about two feet with mud and dirt, behind which stood the wizard to pronounce his fallacious oracles on account of the Prince of Darkness. He had on his head a tuft of feathers variously woven, and in his hand two long knives without sheaths."[1]

The Father endeavoured to enter what he calls "this temple of the devils," but was deterred from doing so

[1] "A Voyage to the Congo." Churchill's edition, p. 583.

by the opposition of the assembled people, and we are consequently left uninformed of the particulars of the sacrifice.

Barbot thus describes the idolatry of the people of Loango:—"All acts of devotion they perform to the field and the house-devils, represented under the shape of idols, of which they have great numbers, to each of which they give a particular name, according as they attribute to them power, having their distinct jurisdictions. To some they ascribe the power of lightning and the wind, and also to serve as scarecrows, to preserve their corn from fowl and vermin; to one they give the command over the fishes of the sea; to another over the fishes in the rivers; to a third over the cattle, &c. Some they make protectors of their health and safety; others they use to avert evils and misfortunes; to another, again, they commend the charge of their sight; of some they beg to be instructed in the mysteries of hidden arts, or magic, and to be able even to forejudge of destiny; neither do they believe them at large, but circumscribe them to limited places, and show their figures in several shapes; some like men, others only poles with small irons on the top, or else a carved image; some of which shapes and representations they carry commonly with them wherever they travel to or fro.

"They have particular masters to instruct them in the making these idols, and call them *Enganga*, or *Janga Mokisie;* whose skill therein they much admire, and account them devil-hunters. When any one requires the *Enganga* to direct him in making an idol, the petitioner invites his whole tribe, acquain-

tance, relations, and even his neighbours; and they being assembled together, the *Mokisie*, or solemnity, continues for the space of fifteen days, in a house of palm boughs, nine of which he must not speak, and during the whole time have no converse with anybody."

"All priests or conjurors, that is, their prophets and divines, are called *Ganga*, or *Ganga Mokisie;* each of them having his particular denomination—given to or assumed by them from the *Mokisie* they serve; and each *Ganga* is dressed after a several manner, and practises different ceremonies."[1]

By the word *Mokisie* was indicated an invisible spiritual power, from whence derived does not clearly appear, which worked for their good or evil, and from which they thought they could learn the knowledge of past or of future things. Of the power supposed to be invested in these idols the following extract concerning *Likokoo*, a wooden image, carved in the shape of a man sitting, and which was at Kinga, a town near the sea coast, furnishes an example:—"They have a thousand ridiculous rhymes concerning this *Likokoo;* as that he preserves from death; that he saves from hurt by *Doojies*, as they call sorcerers; that he makes the dead rise out of their graves in the night, and forces them to labour, helping to catch fish, and to drive canoes in the water, and in the day forces them to their graves again; with many more such fictions, which the old folk make the young believe, and imprint in them from their infancy."

[1] "A Description of Lower Ethiopia." Churchill's edition, p. 477.

According to Livingstone, Reade, and Mr. Monteiro, these descriptions fairly indicate the prevalent beliefs on this phase of religion in the Angolo and Congo regions. The last-named gentleman says :— "In almost every large town there is a 'fetish house' under the care of a 'fetish man.' This house is generally in the form of a diminutive square hut, with mud walls, painted white, and these are covered with figures of men and beasts in red and black colours. The spirit is supposed to reside in this habitation, and is believed to watch over the safety of the town."[1]

The word "fetish," be it said, is a corruption of the Portuguese feitiço, *i.e.*, witchcraft or conjuring; and by the Portuguese, and by others also, it is used somewhat indiscriminately in describing the superstitions of the Africans of whatsoever character they may be. But when applied to idolatry it is scarcely correct. In principle, idolatry and fetishism may be somewhat alike; for both imply a spiritual presence in a material object. Idolatry, however, seems to me to be the outward expression of a belief in a personal deity, having a distinct individuality, residing in some way or another in the idol. Fetishism represents a spiritual power, but no particular deity, entangled in a material object, not usually an idol, but a stick, or a stone, or a bone, or a bunch of feathers, or an animal, it matters little what the object is, by the consecrations of persons specially gifted. Idols are often treated as fetishes, but

[1] "Angolo and the River Congo," vol. i. p. 249.

fetishes are not often idols, for anything "serves the purpose of condensing the impalpable deity into a tangible reality," says Baring-Gould, of the fetish.[1]

It would seem that in Angolo idols are used as fetish, for Mr. Monteiro says:—"There are various figures, generally roughly carved in wood, or made of clay, but always coloured red, black, and white. Some of them have a great reputation, and the 'fetish men' to whom they belong are often sent for from long distances to work some charm or cure with them. I have constantly met them carrying these great ugly figures, and accompanied by two or three attendants beating drums, and chanting a dismal song as they go along."

"On the coast there are several 'fetish men' who are believed to have power over the surf, and their aid is always invoked by the natives when it lasts long, or is so strong as to prevent them going out in their canoes to fish."

Mr. Monteiro does not seem to have discovered, what is undoubtedly the fact, that these "fetish men" were supposed to have power over the sea, because they were the especial priests of the sea god.

Again, he says: "In these towns were the largest 'fetish' houses I have seen in Angolo. There was a large hut built of mud, the walls plastered with white, and painted all over inside and out with grotesque drawings, in black and red, of men and animals. Inside were three life-size figures, very roughly modelled in clay, and of the most indecent descrip-

[1] "The Origin and Development of Religious Belief," p. 175.

tion. Behind this hut was a long court the width of the length of the hut, enclosed with walls about six feet high. A number of figures similar in character to those in the hut were standing in this court, which was kept quite clean and bare of grass. What, if any, were the uses to which these 'fetish' houses were applied I could not exactly ascertain."[1]

These "fetish" houses, or rather temples, were devoted to nature-worship, a species of idolatry that seems to have been universal. In earliest times it prevailed with the Egyptians, it was inveterate among the Jews, it is symbolized in the rites of Adonis, Aphrodite, Isis, &c.; and in India and Japan it is even now most popular.

The deductions of old travellers were not always right, but their habit of connecting the customs of the countries which they visited with corresponding observances in other parts of the world in ancient times, compares favourably with the silence and evident ignorance of some of their modern representatives on these subjects. For instance, Barbot observes:— "It was a custom among the Gentiles to set up many idols on the highways, and elsewhere in the fields, under mean stalls thatched over or otherwise, in view of travellers, as is still practised by the people of Loango, and others in Lower Æthiopia. And the French version of the Bible, in the passage of Lev. xxvi. 30, 'I will destroy your high places, and raze your tabernacles,' &c., takes the word tabernacles, in the plural, for those foul huts or stalls covered over,

[1] "Angolo and the River Congo," vol. ii. p. 7.

under which the idolatrous Israelites, in imitation of the pagans living among and about them, were used to expose their idols in the open country. The French commentators on 2 Kings xxiii. 7, speaking of the women mentioned there, who wove hangings for the grove,—as the English has it, and the French, tents, in lieu of hangings, the Hebrew houses, and the Low Dutch little houses,—say they were little chapels, in the nature of niches or closets, made by these women, in the Temple of Jerusalem, in the days of Josiah, of a sort of stitched work, into which the idolaters of that time used to put their little images or idols; and such were the little silver temples or tabernacles of Diana, the great deity of the Ephesians, made by Demetrius" (Acts xix. 24).

The *grove*, for which the Jewish women wove hangings, to hide, probably, the revolting ceremonies connected with its worship, was, it is supposed, the symbol of the goddess Ashtoreth, the Ishtar of the Assyrians, the Astarte of the Greeks and Romans, the worship of whom was identified with that of Venus. It is certain that in most parts of Africa, but especially in the western regions, an idolatrous worship, conformable to that here alluded to, prevails; whether it be derived from the same source, there is, however, no historical evidence to show.

The idolatry and demonolatry of other regions of West Africa have the same characteristics which mark those of Angolo and the Congo. Throughout northern and southern Guinea you find a vivid belief in the existence and malign influence of a supreme evil spirit, whom the natives endeavour to appease by

continual offerings and sacrifices, sometimes, be it said, of human beings. Besides which there is a multitude of subordinate spirits, many of whom are represented by particular images, and have certain specified acts of worship paid to them. As Mungo Park says :—"The concerns of the world, they believe, are committed by the Almighty to the superintendence and direction of subordinate spirits, over whom they suppose certain magical ceremonies have great influence. A white fowl suspended to the branch of a particular tree, a snake's head, or a few handfuls of fruit, are offerings which ignorance and superstition frequently present to deprecate the wrath or to conciliate the favour of these tutelary agents."

It is, however, in Dahomey that this belief is seemingly most systematised. According to Mr. Skertchley,[1] there are four tutelary deities—fetishes he calls them —of superior rank.

I. The *Danh-gbwe* (Snake), already alluded to.

II. "*Atin-bodun*, whose earthly form is that of various trees, while its domestic abode is in some curious specimen of ceramic art. The worship of *Atin-bodun* consists in faith in its power of averting and curing disease, especially fever. Any tall tree, it is considered, may be inhabited by this deity, but those especially sacred to it are the *Hun*, or silk cotton-tree, and the *Soko*, or poison-tree, a decoction of whose leaves is used as an ordeal to detect any hidden crime."

To *Atin-bodun* there are almost as many priests set

[1] "Dahomey as It Is," p. 468, &c.

apart as to the *Danh-gbwe*, though they are not considered so high in order.

III. *Hu*, the Dahoman Neptune, whose headquarters are at Whydah. A temple, which is nothing more than a hut in an advanced state of ruin, ornamented with bones, skulls, sharks'-jaws, &c., is called by his name; but his dwelling is supposed to be in the sea, and a part of the beach at Whydah is sacred to this god. Here are erected a number of little temples, where the canoe-men make offerings of food, &c., to induce *Hu* to give them a smooth sea. The surf is dangerous on the Whydah coast, and not unfrequently the priests assemble on the beach to sacrifice, in order that the god may be induced to send a vessel ashore.

Formerly, at a certain period of the year, the king used to offer one of his great men as a sacrifice to this deity. He was brought down to the beach, placed in a canoe by the priests, and after sundry offerings, &c., carried out to sea and thrown overboard. But since Whydah has formed part of the possessions of Dahomey, this custom has been done away with.

IV. *Khewyosh*—the thunder god,—or Dahoman Jupiter Tonans, who it seems is not to be confounded with *Mau*, the Supreme Being. He presides over the weather, and punishes those who do not please him with lightning. Connected with the deaths of such as are killed by lightning are some horrible practices. The bodies are torn to pieces by the priests and priestesses, and, Burton affirms, eaten by them. But this, Mr. Skertchley says, is not actually the case, they do but pretend to eat them.

Besides these primary deities there are others who in the estimation of the Dahomans occupy a secondary position. Such are *Bo*, who corresponds to Mars; *Afa*, the God of Wisdom; *Gbwejeh*, to whom are assigned the attributes of Minerva; *Lo*, the God of Fire; *Sapolan*, the Goddess of Small-pox; *Akwachi*, who presides over child-birth; *Hoho*, the preserver of twins; *Demen*, the protectress of the chastity of the Amazons; and *Legba*, who both in its male and female forms may be identified with Priapus. These again are supplemented by a multitude of inferior gods and goddesses, who are guardian or patron deities. Indeed, every occupation in life has its special god, and its particular form of worship.

The mode adopted for maintaining the ranks of the priests and priestesses of the *Danh-gbwe* has been described; the sacred office in the other sections of the priesthood is generally hereditary. But the candidate must exhibit the necessary sign that he has been accepted by some god, or he is rejected as unfit. This sign generally takes the form of a species of ecstacy, during which he manifests all the symptoms of demoniacal possession. This ecstacy lasts about half an hour, and has such a powerful effect upon the sufferer, that, as soon as its violence is over, fainting generally supervenes.

On recovering, he tells his instructors that he has seen a vision of a god, who, from his descriptions, the priests declare to be *Lo* or *Bo*, as the case may be, and the neophyte is then formally devoted to his service.

It would seem, from the description which Burton

gives of it, that the mythology of the Egbas[1] is not, in its constitution, unlike the description which Plato gives of that of his own time and country. Their idea of God has already been given. They hold Him to be, however, so far above and beyond mankind, that He must be approached through intermediate agencies, and that He has deputed His functions to inferior beings; consequently, though they use His name, they do not pray to Him, but satisfy the yearnings of their human nature by the adoration of these subordinate beings, whom they represent by idols. Originally, it is probable, the idols were regarded simply as the symbols of these inferior deities; but now the symbols are confounded with the things symbolized, and have become objects of absolute worship.

The principal deities or idols are *Obatla*, *Shango*, and *Ifa*. *Obatla* means King of Whiteness, or purity, and his worshippers wear white garments. He is supposed to have created the first man, *Okikishi*, the lord of speech, whose position in relation to the human race is not unlike that of Adam, and the first woman, *Iye*, or life, from *ye*, to live, which name, in sound and idea, resembles Hauva or Eve. They are supposed to have come from heaven.

Obatla represents the productive energy of nature, or the generative principle, as distinguished from the creative power of God. *Shango* corresponds in attributes to Thor and Jupiter Tonans. *Ifa* is said to be a myth, not a person, and is regarded as the

[1] "Abeokuta and the Cameroon Mountains," p. 221.

revealer of futurity, and the patron of marriage and childbirth.

Besides these, there are many other deities, the principal of which are *Esha*, the rejected, or the devil; the Sun and the Moon, which are worshipped at Ife, the Parthenon of Yomba, where a brazen chair and brass images of these objects are said to have fallen from heaven; and Ofan, the god of the blacksmiths.

The priests and priestesses, both of Dahomey and Abbeokuta, have many privileges. They, for the most part, follow the ordinary occupations of life, but they are not subject to the same laws as the laity, but, as occasion requires, are tried by laws of their own. The great majority of the priests, it would seem, become the vilest members of the community, and make a flagrantly immoral use of the power which their office gives them. It is with the Africans as with the Hindus, the people who are most devoted to religion, are far from being the most moral; but there is, in their estimation, no incongruity in this, for holiness of life is not required by the sacred profession; indeed, it has no connection with it.

The position which the high-priest of Congo holds shows that some, at least, of the Africans believe in the deification of living men, in virtue of their office. Father Merolla seems to have been the first European who discovered this. He says of this heathen pontiff, who is thus distinguished: "He is styled in the country language, *Ganga Chilerne*, being reputed god of the earth, and to whom is consequently paid the first-fruits of its products, due to him, as they say, as its author, and not either to the ordinary work of

nature, or to the extraordinary one of Providence. This power he also boasts of being able to communicate to others, when and as often as he pleases. He further asserts, that his body is not capable of suffering natural death; and, therefore, to confirm his adorers in that opinion, whenever he finds his end approaching, either through age or a disease, he calls for such a one of his disciples as he designs to succeed him, and pretends to communicate to him his great power; and afterwards, in public (where this tragedy is always acted), he commands him to tie a halter about his neck, and to strangle him therewith, or else to take a club and knock him down dead. This command being once pronounced is soon executed, and the wizard thereby sent a martyr to the devil. The reason that this is done in public is to make known the successor ordained by the last breath of the predecessor, and to show that he has the same power of producing rain, and the like. If this office were not thus continually filled, the inhabitants say, That the earth would soon become barren, and mankind consequently perish."

According to later travellers, the high-priest of the Congoese now goes by the name of Chitomé, but he is not less venerated than in Father Merolla's time. A sacred fire burns in his house continually, the very ashes of which are supposed to retain medicinal virtues, and are paid for accordingly. He has the entire regulation of the lower orders of the priesthood, and makes a progress throughout the land in order to settle their differences. During the time he is thus occupied there is, on pain of death, a divorce

between husbands and wives. He conducts the coronation of the king, and before the king is presented to the people as their sovereign he has to abase himself before the priest, whom he humbly supplicates to be gracious to him; he lies prostrate before the door of his hut; he promises to respect his authority; and submits to be literally trampled on by the priestly feet. But now, as in bygone days, the end of the Chitomé is the cord or the club.

It is only where belief in the supernatural is rampant that such a state of things could exist; and, in this instance, the superstition that fosters it stops short of God, and does not rise above belief in, and fear of, the spiritual world.

With certain variations, not greater than are found amongst different nations in other parts of the world, this belief in the spiritual world finds expression amongst all the tribes of Africa that have been brought to our knowledge.

The Krumen have great faith in the efficacy of amulets or charms, which is a phase of superstition properly belonging to fetishism, but which is undoubtedly founded on a belief in supernatural powers that give efficacy to these charms, and in others that are influenced by them. There is, however, amongst them a belief in the existence of a local demon, who lives in a cave, which is in consequence called the Grand Devil Cave. According to Mr. Wood, this cave is a hollow in an enormous rock, having far in the interior a recess in which the demon resides. Having that dislike to naming the object of their

superstitions, which cause people near home to call fairies good people, the Krumen speak of this demon as "Suffin," *i.e.*, something. Their offerings to "Suffin" consist of what is most precious to themselves—beads, tobacco, provisions, and rum; in return for which they receive counsel beyond what mere human wisdom can give. They have an implicit belief in the existence of "Suffin," and think that he consumes their offerings as surely as the Babylonians thought that Bel consumed daily the "twelve great measures of fine flour, the forty sheep, and the six vessels of wine."[1]

Of the religious beliefs of the tribes of the western interior, those of the Balonda are best known. According to Dr. Livingstone, they are much given to idolatry. Idols are seen in almost every village, and for the most part take the forms of animals. They are generally the representations of deities who are supposed to have dominion over the various forms of disease to which these people are exposed; but a few are thought to have prophetic powers, and might properly be called teraphim, as by their means future events are foretold.

It is probable that, in some instances, these idols are regarded as something more than symbolic of the spirits worshipped,—that they are themselves invested with a supernatural power, and to that extent, therefore, they may be regarded as fetishes. But in the confusion of ideas which exists in Africa upon all matters connected with their religious beliefs,

[1] "Natural History of Man," p. 615.

I thought myself warranted in making a distinction between the idolatry I have instanced and fetishism; for it is difficult to say where such idols cease to be merely the symbols of a supernatural agency, and become invested with the essence of what they represent.

Demoniacal possession is intimately connected with demonolatry. Whether this possession be in its character like that referred to in the New Testament, I cannot say, but that it exists in Africa the people themselves implicitly believe, and I do not doubt. Indeed, the very existence of spirits is proved to their worshippers by the facts of demoniacal possession, exorcism, and the power of witchcraft. Possibly the priests and others who are called, for want of a better name, medicine-men, may practise magnetism; and hysteria, with a little of that strange something which is known as *psychic force*, may account for many of the phenomena that are regarded as demoniacal; yet I have no hesitation in saying that I have myself seen men who were said to be demoniacs, and that they manifested symptoms which in my judgment can only be accounted for by the fact that for the time being they were what they were said to be.

In connection with this subject, it is a great mistake to suppose that the victims, who are generally priests or medicine-men, wizards or wizard-finders, are generally conscious impostors. Some may be, some may exaggerate symptoms which in themselves they honestly think to be supernatural; but the majority believe what is believed of them, but with

greater enthusiasm and fanaticism, and in this lies their power over the people.

The following confessions of two Christian Kaffirs will serve to show how deeply rooted their belief is in the world of spirits, and how largely it enters into their Christian as well as their heathen life.

"As regards the apparitions which a man sees," said Umpengula Mbanda, "when he is going to pray in secret, I too have seen them again and again. When I was beginning to kneel, or when I was saying the first word perhaps, there was something beginning to approach me, as though it said, 'Now he has closed his eyes, and will no longer see me; let me draw near and bite him, or lay hold of him, or stab him.' If I steadily refused to arise, Oh! at once there came a great noise, which took away all my courage, and led me to say, 'This is something real.' The first was a little thing; now there is coming a great thing to kill me.'

"When these things come to any one, they always come separately. There comes a snake with great eyes, and very fearful; so that when I have knelt I could not remain firm, but rose up again. If it was not a snake, a leopard would come on stealthily to lay hold of me; for I could not see, but was looking on the ground, intending to pray to the Lord. But my prayer was no longer steady. I began to pray a little in my heart, praying and stopping, that my ears may not only listen to my prayer, but also to the crackling made by the leopard as it came to seize me. When I saw that it was something real, and that the leopard was preparing itself to seize me, I arose.

"And if it was not a leopard, it would be a man who hated me, with a long assegai in his hand, approaching to kill me, that I may die in that place; and he, too, went stealthily, that I might not hear him.

"When I prayed under such circumstances, I no longer prayed with singleness of heart, but in a hurry, wishing to look, without delay, to the place from which the danger threatened me; for I was in danger.

"And when the man was now stabbing me, I would arise, the sentence which I kept uttering being unfinished; it was already begun but not ended, but cut in two. I arose that I might escape. When I arose I did so with a start, and looked to the place whence the man came, but did not see him.

"It was no longer possible for me to return to my prayers, and finish what I had began to say. No! there was now an end of it, and I could no longer say what I wanted for the false alarm which had frightened me. Oh! this was repeated again and again. It happened continually in my prayers."

But the good man strove against the temptation. persisted in prayers, and conquered, so that the apparitions came no more to him.

Said Usebemba Dhlahhla: "It happened when I was being instructed for baptism, I used habitually to pray at all times in secret. I did so because it was as if I really saw the Lord; and I went away from prayer with my heart very white indeed. But once when I was praying I saw a venomous beast coming to me, as though it was about to injure me. I darted

up as I left off praying. But, forsooth, I saw nothing. This happened twice; but on the third time I strengthened myself, and said, 'Let us just see if it will injure me or no.' I strengthened myself till I had ended my prayer, and I saw nothing when I had finished. I doubted about it, and asked what it meant. But I had already heard from believers that when a man prayed alone venomous creatures came to him, when they were urged on by Satan. But this continued without cessation, until I took courage, and saw that it was nothing. And then there came with power a great light to me; and when I found myself full of light, I reproved myself for being continually startled by nothing. I strengthened myself with the strength of the Lord, and saw that He was with me always. After that when I prayed I saw that it was the Lord, and it was as if I could fly away to Him for the joy which overflowed my heart."[1]

[1] "Religious System of the Amazulu," p. 240.

CHAPTER III.

CONCERNING THE SPIRITS OF DEAD MEN.

It is thought by some that belief in the existence of the disembodied spirits of human beings comprises the whole of the faith which the Africans have in the spiritual world. Captain Burton, for instance, says of the Egbas, and by inference of the Africans generally, they have "no such thing as demonolatry, because they have no demons, or the genus Christian philosophers opined to be evil spirits. The distinction between diabolii and daimonii is unknown to them, but they believe in certain entities, which, unless propitiated, will do them evil."[1] But had I no other evidence than that which he himself supplies in his various books of travel in Africa, I should doubt the correctness of this conclusion. It is true that the demons may frequently be invested with human attributes, but, save by the very ignorant amongst the natives, they are not thought to have had a human existence; whereas ancestor-worship undoubtedly has for its object the disembodied spirits of human beings. It is not every

[1] "Abeokuta and the Cameroon Mountains," vol. i. p. 200.

African that is qualified to give a correct account of the religious beliefs of his people, many are as ignorant of all but the externals of their religion, as multitudes amongst ourselves are of the true principles of Christianity. But the more intelligent amongst them recognize the distinction between Demonolatry and Ancestor Worship as clearly as the best informed Zulu Kaffirs distinguish between *Unkulunkulu* and the Lord of Heaven. A belief in the existence of the spirits of men after the death of the body is, of course, involved in ancestor worship. This is a belief that is common to mankind; for the exceptions that have been declared have not been clearly established, and they refer to a few localities only, and to insignificant sections of the human race.

To most people this general prevalence of the belief in the continuance of the soul's existence after death is a proof that it has been inherited from a common source. To this, however, Mr. Tyler demurs. "It may have been so," he remarks, "but the historical argument is made valueless by the fact that certain natural phenomena may have suggested to the mind of man, while in a certain stage of development, the idea of a future state, and this not only once, but again and again, in different regions, and at different times."[1]

There certainly is no historical evidence to show, that in Africa this belief has its root in Eden, neither

[1] "Researches into the Early History of Mankind," Introduction, p. 5.

is there any proof that it has not; but, however originated, and from whatever source proceeding, it is perhaps the most active belief of all the multitudinous tribes that people that vast continent.

But though there be this general belief amongst the Africans in the continuance of the soul's existence after death, it does not reconcile them to the idea that they must die, and they never willingly speak of the possibility of their own death, nor allow others to do so. "O king, live for ever!" is the language required by the great men from their inferiors, and should any one imply by word or by deed that his chief is mortal, he would probably have to give unwilling proof of his own mortality in a very few hours. Even in a European the offence would be considered a grave one, and, indeed, any allusion to death jars gratingly on the feelings of all who hear it.

This disinclination to face the fact that they must die does not arise from any idea that the future state brings them to a judgment upon the character of their doings while in the body. The nearest approach to the notion of such a judgment is found amongst the Dahomans. According to Skertchley, "*Mau* (God) has an assistant who keeps a record of the good and evil deeds of every person by means of a stick, the good works being notched on one end, and the bad on the other. When a man dies his body is judged by a balance struck between the two ends of the stick. If the good preponderates, it is permitted to join the spirit in Kutomen, or Dead Land, but if, on the contrary, the evil outweighs the good, it is utterly de-

stroyed, and a new body created for the use of the spirit. With this single exception, all the rewards and punishments are given in this world."[1]

I have met with no other instance where reward and punishment for deeds done in the body was relegated to the future state. The general idea is, that if a man escape punishment here, no matter what his deeds may have been, he will be exposed to none hereafter. Of a heaven and a hell, the abodes of the good and the bad, the Africans, save where they have imported the idea from Christians or Mahommedans, have seemingly no notion. The hereafter of the Africans is both socially and morally the eternal continuance of a state of existence similar to that possessed here. Kings will continue to be kings, slaves will remain slaves, and so on through all the varied circumstances of life, and with all the passions, caprices, and contradictions of mortality still clinging to them.

But, though "absent from the body," they are not thought to lose knowledge of, or power to influence the affairs of mankind on earth; indeed, they are usually credited with a prescience and power greater than that which they possessed when in the flesh, and are supposed to be capable of wreaking their vengeance on those who do not liberally minister to their wants and enjoyments.

Thus it is that they are addressed in prayer as counsellors of the living, invoked in adversity, grati-

[1] "Dahomey as It Is," p. 461.

fied by sacrifices and presents, and worshipped in ways that are thought most agreeable to them.

But such worship has no national significance. The people pay great deference to the spirits of their own immediate ancestors, but do not in the least regard those which belong to other families; and the spirits are supposed to have no sympathy except with relations and immediate descendants. No recollections and associations calculated to foster national heroism, and exalt public virtue are kept alive by this worship. The nearest approach to anything of the kind that I have been able to discover is found amongst the Zulus and the Hottentots. Chaka was the founder of the present Zulu dynasty. He was a man of great military genius; and by his conquests he raised the Zulus from a state of insignificance to a position of eminence, such as no other African tribe had achieved in the recollections of man. The Zulus, therefore, regard him as a national hero, and swear by his name: yet they pay him no worship. The Hottentots venerated men of renown. They did not deify them, nor honour them with tombs or statues; but they dedicated to their memory, woods, mountains, fields, and rivers; and when they passed the places that had been thus consecrated, it was their custom to implore for themselves and their cattle the protection of the spirits of these men. The form of prayer that they used on such occasions is not known, for they carefully concealed it; but Kolben and others say that they prayed standing, and with their heads muffled up in their mantles.

"The prevailing modes of treating the dead," says Schlegel, "among different nations, are not only worthy of great consideration as testimonies of their modes of thinking and degrees of civilization; they are in general, over and above all this, very intimately connected with their secret impressions and feelings of religion."[1]

The funeral rites of the Africans are generally connected with their impressions of the existence of the soul after death, and frequently indicate the ideas which they have of the necessities of the departed.

The way in which the Bongo dispose of their dead proves, I think, that they have a greater sense of the hereafter than Schweinfurth credits them with. Immediately after life is extinct, the corpse is placed, like the Peruvian mummies, in what may be described as a crouching posture, with the knees forced up to the chin, and is then firmly bound round the head and legs. When the body has been thus compressed into the smallest compass, it is sewn into a sack made of skins, and placed in a deep grave. A shaft is made perpendicularly down for about four feet, and then a niche is hollowed in the side, so that the corpse should not have to sustain any vertical pressure from the earth which is then thrown in to fill up the grave. "A heap of stones," says Schweinfurth, "is then piled over the spot in a short cylindrical form, and supported by strong stakes, which are driven into the soil all round. On the top of the pile is placed a

[1] "History of Literature," p. 131.

pitcher, frequently the same from which the deceased was accustomed to drink.

"The graves are always close to the huts, their site being marked by a number of long forked branches, carved, by way of ornament, with numerous notches and incisions, and having their points sharpened like horns. The typical meaning belonging to these stakes has long since fallen into oblivion; and notwithstanding all my endeavours to become acquainted with the Bongo, and to initiate myself into their manners and customs, I could never get a satisfactory explanation.

"Whenever a burial takes place, all the neighbours are invited to attend, and are abundantly entertained with merissa (native beer). The entire company takes part in the formation of the grave, in the rearing of the memorial urn, and in the erecting of the votive sticks. When the ceremony is finished, they shoot at the stakes with arrows, which they leave sticking in the wood."[1]

Had the Bongo been willing, I have no doubt that they were able to give a reason for such proceedings, as well as for their custom of burying men with their faces turned towards the north, and women with their faces turned towards the south, that would have shown that they are not utterly barren of impressions concerning the hereafter of mankind. It is rarely that the idea which, in the first instance, prompted a custom, is lost altogether; even when the people tell you that they have no other reason for their proceed-

[1] "The Heart of Africa," vol. i.

ings than the desire to do what others did before them, they are not always to be believed.

In the regions adjacent to Zanzibar, according to Bishop Steere, Mohammedanism and tombs end together, the heathens being so careful to conceal their places of sepulture that you may travel about for some time without knowing what becomes of the dead. I cannot find that in any other part of Africa, either now or in days gone by, the dead are thus hidden away. The graveyards, though most often in a secluded place, as becomes the abode of the dead, are generally easy enough to find, and the graves are frequently as conspicuous as those of the Bongo, and almost invariably betoken by their arrangements some belief in the existence of the soul after death.

The Abbé Proyart,[1] whose book was first published in Paris in 1776, says of the tribes with whom he became acquainted :—"They believed the soul to be spiritual, and that it survived the body, without, however, knowing what was its state after separation from the body, whether joy or pain; they only say that they believe it flies from the towns and villages, and flutters in the air above the woods and forests in the way which the deity pleases.

"This belief in the immortality of the soul, joined to their uncertainty respecting its state after separation from the body, inspires them at once with great respect for the dead, and great fear of ghosts, since they never fail, in order to acquit themselves well

[1] "History of Loango, Kakungo," &c. Pinkerton's Collection.

towards their parents and friends, to celebrate their obsequies with all the pomp they can afford.

"As soon as the sick person has breathed his last, the ministers of medicine retire, as well as the players of instruments; his nearest relations take possession of the body, which they extend on a scaffold, under which they light a fire, which throws up a thick smoke. When the corpse is sufficiently smoked, they expose it for some days in the open air, placing beside it a person who has nothing to do but drive away the flies. Then they wrap it in a prodigious quantity of foreign stuffs, or stuffs of the country. They judge of the riches of the heirs by the quality of their stuffs, and of their affection for the dead by the thickness of the roller. The mummy thus dressed is taken to a public place, and sometimes lodged in a sort of niche, where it remains a greater or less time, according to the rank it occupied in the world when living. During all this time the parents, the nearest relatives, the friends, and, above all, the spouses of the dead, who place their huts near the spot where the body is exposed, assemble regularly every evening to weep, sing, and dance round the funeral lodge. On the eve of the day fixed for the interment, they enclose the body, with all the stuffs that envelope it, in a large coffin wrought by art in the form of a tun. On the morrow, when all the relatives and friends are arrived, they put the coffin into a sort of funeral car, to which the men are yoked, and they set forward. Care is taken to level the road by which the convoy has to pass. For the illustrious dead, such as kings and

princes, they cut new ones across the plains, of the breadth of 30 or 40 feet. Along the road they make the greatest noise possible ; they dance, sing, play on instruments, and all this is done with the greatest demonstration of grief. When they reach the burial-place, which is sometimes far from the town or village, they lower the coffin into a hole about 15 feet deep, cut like a well, which they instantly fill with earth. The rich often inter with the dead their favourite jewels, which are generally pieces of coral or silver. There are some who raise the tomb, and place by it eatables, animals' teeth, or some antiquities by which the deceased set great store, and which were formerly instruments of superstition."

Barbot gives descriptions of the funeral rites of the various tribes he visited, and they all are in harmony with the persuasion which, he says, most of them have, that immediately after death they go to another world where they live in the same station as they did here, and are there maintained by the offerings of men and women, provisions and clothes, which the relations they have left behind make for them.

At the present time the observances at funerals are everywhere similar in character. When the Bechuana perceive indications of death they throw a net over the body, and hold it in a sitting posture, with the knees brought in contact with the chin, till life is gone. The grave, which is frequently made in the fence surrounding the cattle-fold itself, if for a man, is about three feet in diameter, and six feet deep. The body is not conveyed through the door of the court-

yard, but through an opening made in the fence for that purpose. It is carried to the grave, having the head covered with a skin, and is buried in a sitting posture, with the face facing the north. The grave is gradually filled in with many ceremonies and much lamentation; and in every act and word on these occasions they show that they have some idea that the dead are not annihilated. Indeed, when they dream of a deceased relative, they believe that he has really visited them, and they make offerings at his grave to satisfy his supposed wants.

When a chief of the Damaras, a tribe in the south-west interior, dies, as soon as life is extinct the spine is broken by a blow from a stone mallet. Then the long rope, which it is the fashion of the Damaras to wear round the loins, is removed, the body is lashed together in a sitting posture, and tied up in ox-hides. After which it is buried in the earth with the face to the north, as do the Bongo, the Bechuana, and many other tribes. Cattle are then slaughtered, and over the grave a post is erected, to which the skulls of the oxen are attached, and on which the bow, arrows, spears, and club of the deceased are hung. Large stones are then heaped above and around the grave, and thorns are piled about it to keep off the jackals and hyænas. The funeral ceremonies being completed, the new chief, accompanied by the people under his command, forsakes the place where the deceased lived. He remains at a distance for at least a year, during which time he wears the badge of mourning, a dark-coloured conical cap. When the period of mourning

is over, the people return, headed by their chief who goes to his father's grave, kneels by it, and whispers that he has returned, together with the wives and cattle which his father gave him, and prays for his parent's aid in all his undertakings. Cattle are then slaughtered, and a feast is held in memory of the dead chief and in honour of the living one. The deceased chief is supposed to be spiritually present and to partake of the feast. A couple of twigs are cut from the tree which is the symbol of the caste to which he belonged, and with these each piece of meat is touched before it is eaten by the guests.

It is a custom of the Damaras to take food to the graves of deceased friends, of which they beg them to partake, and in return to aid them in difficulties, and to grant them herds of cattle, or whatever may be their hearts' desire.

In east central Africa I have seen hundreds of graves, which were usually distinguished by a slight mound, and the sex of the deceased was denoted by the broken warlike weapons and other articles peculiar to the use of the man, and the fractured domestic utensils of the woman.

The ceremonies connected with the burial of the dead amongst the tribes of this region, in the case of those who had been removed by deaths that were unmistakably natural, expressed not only the grief of the survivors, but their undoubted belief in the continuance of the soul's existence after death.

If the deceased belonged to the common sort of people, the expression of grief on the part of his

relatives was not less demonstrative than that with which his betters were honoured, but he was left to shift for himself in the world of spirits, and a dreary life he was supposed to have there; but if he belonged to the great ones of the tribe, not only was he supplied with abundance of food, &c., but women were sacrificed to minister to his wants and pleasures.

When death is occasioned by accident, or by any cause other than is considered natural, the body is not interred in the earth by the tribes I became acquainted with. Such, it is supposed, had died the death of the accursed, and were slung up in trees to be devoured by the fowls of the air, lest the earth itself should be brought under the evil influence that had deprived them of life. Of the hereafter of such I could learn nothing, simply because the people were afraid to speak of them lest they also should be brought under the curse.

The Zulu Kaffir tribes pay great veneration to the dead, and their funeral rites, save in the case of the lowest of the people and criminals, include sacrifices of cattle, though not of human beings. Such sacrifices are frequently repeated in order to invoke the aid of the spirits before they go to battle, or to appease them when they are supposed to be angry, or to satisfy the promptings of filial or fraternal affection. On these occasions the flesh of the slain beasts is eaten, but the horns, hoofs, and skulls are burnt with many ceremonial observances.

There is, however, one terrible instance of human sacrifice on the death of a great Zulu personage. On

the death of the mother of Chaka, the first great chief of the Zulus, there was a sacrifice of people as terrible as any of which we have any record.

When told that his mother was dead, he and his principal chiefs put on their war apparel, and went to the hut in which the body lay. He stood silent for some time in a mournful attitude, with his head bowed upon his shield. At length his feelings seemed to become ungovernable, and he broke out into frantic yells. The assembled people sympathized with their chief by filling the air with loud lamentations. During the day great numbers of natives from the surrounding country came to the place of weeping, and joined in the terrible outcry. By noon of the next day, it is said that not less than sixty thousand persons, male and female, had assembled, hundreds of whom were lying on the ground faint from excessive fatigue and want of nourishment, for none had dared to cease from their lamentations, or to refresh themselves with food or water. Soon after mid-day the whole assembly formed a circle, with Chaka in their centre, and sang a war-song, at the close of which he ordered several men to be executed on the spot, when the cries of woe became more violent than ever. Then, as if bent on convincing their chief of the reality of their grief, the people began an indiscriminate massacre amongst themselves, many of them receiving the blow of death while inflicting it on others. Those who were found near the river, panting for water, were beaten to death by men and women, who were mad with excitement.

Seven thousand people, it is said, perished on this occasion.

On the second day after her death, the body of Chaka's mother was placed in a large grave near the spot where she had died, and ten of the handsomest girls in the neighbourhood were buried alive in the same grave. Twelve thousand men, all fully armed, attended this horrible funeral, and were stationed as a guard over the grave for a whole year.

But extravagant as these rites were, they were not thought to be sufficient, and regiments of soldiers were sent through the country for the purpose of putting to death all those who had not been present at the funeral, and several thousands more people were killed. Then it was decreed that the earth should not be cultivated for a whole year, and that the milk of all the cattle should be poured out on to the ground; but at the end of three months, in consideration of receiving a present of much cattle from the chiefs and great men, the king annulled this decree, which really condemned the people to a state of starvation. Lastly, it was ordered that if during the year of mourning children should be born, both parents and children should be put to death. This order was enforced with cruel stringency, and led to the deaths of many persons.

When the year of mourning had expired, the people, in obedience to the king's mandate, assembled in great numbers at the royal kraal, and a hundred thousand oxen were brought together to grace the crowning ceremony, their bellowing being thought

to be peculiarly acceptable to the dead. Standing in the midst of these herds, Chaka began to weep aloud, and the lamentations at once became general. This manifestation of sorrow was continued till sunset, when a great number of cattle were sacrificed. Next morning, the people being marshalled in military order, the king took his place in the centre of the kraal. Every man who possessed cattle had brought at least one calf, and each man cut open the side of a calf and tore out the gall bladder. Regiment after regiment then marched before the king, and every man as he passed sprinkled him with gall. After this he submitted himself to certain religious ablutions, and with these proceedings he was released from his state of mourning.

What feeling prompted Chaka to make this sacrifice of human beings,—a sacrifice, so far as I can learn, foreign to the habits of his country,—does not seem to be known. It was, probably, rather the effect of his own sanguinary will than the consequence of any desire to provide attendants and subjects for his mother in the spirit-world. Like other tyrants in other parts of the world, and in other ages of the world, he resolved that his people should share in his grief, and so gave them good cause for doing so.

In most parts of Africa, however, great personages are honoured at, and, occasionally, for some time after their deaths, by the sacrifice of men and women, and such sacrifices generally originate with the idea that it is the duty of the living to supply the needs of the dead, or the desire to deprecate their anger, and to

gain their assistance in the affairs of this world. The earliest travellers in Africa describe such sacrifices, and they invariably declare that the cause of them is the same as that which I have indicated.

In some regions the influence of Europeans and Mohammedans have lessened the number of such sacrifices, and in others have done away with them altogether; but in Dahomey and Ashantee they have increased to a horrible extent since Northern Guinea was first visited by the Portuguese.

The "Customs" of Dahomey are now infamously notorious. The word custom is an Anglicised form of the French *coutume*, a general habit, and may be defined as a state ceremony, the performance of which has become imperative through long usage. There are two kinds of customs in Dahomey—the grand customs, which are only performed on the death of a sovereign, and the king's customs, which are annual, and take place in the autumn. The grand customs are ancient, the king's customs are of recent origin.

It is probable that the stories told of the thousands of human beings that have been put to death on these occasions are exaggerations; but whatever may have been the case in days gone by, it seems certain hundreds should be substituted for thousands now-a-days. It may be that a thousand men and women are sacrificed at the grand customs, and about five hundred per annum in ordinary years. The victims, be it said, are not, as some suppose, selected capriciously from the general population, but are either criminals or prisoners of war, who, instead of being executed

on the spot for their crimes, or killed when made prisoners, are reserved for sacrifice, and are usually treated as well as is consistent with their safe custody.

As I have said, the African idea of life in the world of spirits is that it is a counterpart of life here. Therefore, when a king dies, and even before the performance of the customs, many of his favourite wives and most devoted officers and slaves kill themselves (perhaps to escape the indignity of being killed) that he may not be without any circumstance of kingly dignity, or be deprived of any pleasure that he has been used to here.

In the days gone by, at the commencement of the grand custom, the king, arrayed in his royal apparel and attended by his favourite wives and officers, appeared on a high platform erected for the occasion, in front of which collected a multitude of men and women, frenzied with excitement and rum, and who rent the air with their savage cries of welcome to their king. In recognition of their salutations he threw amongst them cowries, beads, rolls of cloths, &c., for which they fought and scrambled like wild beasts. Then came the cry, "We are hungry, O king! Feed us, O king, for we are hungry!" This was repeated until they had lashed themselves into a frenzy of bloodthirsty fury, when the victims were brought forth gagged, so that they might not petition the king for mercy, (in which case they would have been released,) and firmly secured by being lashed inside a basket so that they could not move hand or foot. At the sight of the victims the cries of the people in-

creased, but when the king rose they ceased altogether, and the vast multitude looked on in a state of mute though savage expectation. A victim was placed before the king, and he with his hand or foot pushed it off the platform into the midst of the crowd below, by whom, with hideous yells, the basket was rent to pieces, and the man or woman, as the case might be, torn limb from limb, the people fighting like wild beasts for each portion of the still quivering body. Victim after victim was disposed of in this manner day by day, until the number prepared for the customs had been sacrificed.

Each king of Dahomey, however, tries in some way to outvie his predecessor at the grand customs, and the present king, Gelele, made a change in the mode of performing them, rather, it is supposed, as an expression of filial affection than with the vainglorious desire to distinguish himself by so doing. Instead of pushing off the victims himself from the platform whereon he and his court were assembled, he built a circular tower about thirty feet high, from the top of which they were flung by men appointed to that duty; and instead of permitting the people to tear the bodies in pieces, they were beheaded by an executioner who drained their blood into a hole that had been excavated to receive it. This gave rise to the false report that Gelele had floated a canoe in the blood of the victims.

The annual customs last for four days, and are accompanied by many barbaric displays of the king's wealth and power. Some of the victims are exhibited,

dressed in white calico shirts, bound with red ribbon, and wearing on their heads tall-pointed white caps with blue ribbon wound spirally round them. Others are kept in the king's shed, which is built for the occasion, and close to which is a little tent containing the relics of his father, and supposed to be temporarily inhabited by his ghost. During the ceremonies the king, leaning on a staff decorated with a human skull, frequently turns toward this little tent, and in silence adores his father's spirit.

On the evening of the fourth day, the Evil night, as it is called, the king walks in procession to the market-place, where the chief executioner, with his own hand, puts to death the victims that have been reserved. The precise nature of the proceedings is not known, as none are allowed to leave their houses except the king's retinue, on pain of being carried off to swell the list of the victims. It is, however, said that the king speaks to those who are about to die, charging them with messages to his dead father, telling him that his memory is revered, and that a number of new attendants have been sent to minister to him, and strikes the first blow with his own hand. Other victims are put to death within the palace walls, the Amazons being the executioners: such are clubbed to death after the king has dictated his messages.

The annual customs were inaugurated in order to do honour to the lately deceased king, by sending him a yearly number of attendants befitting his rank.

Besides these sacrifices at the customs, scarcely a day passes without an execution of a similar character.

Whatever the king does must be made known to his father, and a man, who is first charged with a message, is despatched to the spirit world as the informant. On any event in the king's life, no matter how trivial the occasion, a messenger is sent to inform his deceased father of it; and should it be discovered that some of the particulars have been forgotten, another execution takes place, that the omission may be repaired.

One would think that this superstition had found its worst manifestation in Dahomey; but bad as the Dahomans are, Mr. Skertchley thinks them less cruel and vindictive in their passions than the Ashantees, and less sanguinary in their dispositions; and as the natural character qualifies to a great extent religious belief and custom, he affirms that the religious observances of the Ashantees are even more revolting than those of the Dahomans. In Dahomey there is none of the barbarous cruelty which inevitably attends belief in witchcraft; for no Dahoman, it is said,[1] "believes that any person can injure any other by prayers, incantations, &c., since all are under the care of the Supreme Being, who will not delegate His authority to any mortal. A man may influence a god in his own behalf, but with regard to others he is powerless." In Ashantee, however, it seems that belief in witchcraft is carried to a horrible extent, and causes wide-spread misery and never-ending suffering; and customs like those which prevail in Dahomey are

[1] "Dahomey as It Is."

more numerous, and are attended with a greater shedding of blood. On the death of the king, or any member of the royal family, on the occasion of the king's birthday, which is celebrated weekly, and at the Yam and the Adai customs, the former occurring in the beginning of September, and the latter every three weeks, there is a great sacrifice of human beings. In Dahomey only kings are thus honoured, but in Ashantee every great man is similarly venerated. Besides the occasions already named, before war, and after any battle, there is a great slaughter of victims.

Mr. Bowditch, the British envoy to Coomassie in 1817, describes what he saw and heard during his sojourn at the Ashantee capital, and from his book the following information is gained.

On the death of a king, all the customs which have been for the people who have died during his reign have to be repeated by the families who had thus honoured their relatives, in order to amplify that for the monarch, which is also solemnized independently, and with every excess of extravagance and barbarity.

Victims are indiscriminately made. The brothers, sons, and nephews of the king sally forth with muskets and fire promiscuously at the people, and the murders committed on such occasions are not resisted or prevented. Few persons of rank leave their houses for the first two or three days after the king's death is proclaimed, but they thrust forth their dependents and slaves, as a composition for their own absence.

The king's ocras, *i.e.* favourite slaves, and others,

who, for the sake of certain privileges, stake their lives upon the king's life, are always put to death; besides which a great number of women are sacrificed on the royal tomb at the time of interment.

At the custom for Sai Quamina, two hundred persons were sacrificed weekly for three months. But the most celebrated custom was that of the mother of the then reigning king. He sacrificed 3,000 victims, two-thirds of whom were Fantee prisoners, for it occurred during a war with the Fantees, and every town and village in the kingdom sent its quota of victims, the numbers being proportioned to the population of each place.

Mr. Bowditch thus describes the Yam custom:—"The Yam custom is like the Saturnalia; neither theft, intrigue, or assault are punishable during its continuance, but the grossest liberty prevails. The principal caboceers (captains) sacrificed a slave at each quarter of the town, on their *entrée* on Friday, the 5th of September. On Saturday, the 6th, the ceremony commenced. All the heads of the kings and caboceers whose kingdoms had been conquered since Sai Tatoo to the present reign, with those of the chiefs who had been executed for subsequent revolts, were displayed by two parties of executioners, each party numbering more than a hundred, who passed by in an impassioned dance, some with the most irresistible grimaces, some with the most frightful gestures; they clashed their knives upon the skulls, in which sprigs of thyme were inserted to keep the spirits from troubling the king. About one hundred persons, mostly culprits

who had been reserved for the occasion, are generally sacrificed in different quarters of the town at this custom. Several slaves were also sacrificed at Bantama over the large brass pan, their blood mingled with the vegetable and animal matter within (fresh and purified), to complete the charm and produce invincible fetishe. All the chiefs kill several slaves, that their blood may flow into the hole from whence the new Yam is taken. The unhappy victims on these occasions are led to execution with knives thrust through their jaws and tongue from side to side, and afterwards literally hacked to pieces."

The greatest human sacrifice that was made during Mr. Bowditch's residence at Coomassie took place on the eve of the Adai custom, early in January. It was made in consequence of the king dreaming, or being otherwise supernaturally informed, that if he washed the bones of his mother and sisters, who died since he ascended the throne, it would make the war in which he was about to engage successful. The bones were, therefore, taken from their coffins, and bathed in rum and water with great ceremony; and, after being wiped with towels of silk, they were rolled in gold dust, and wrapped in strings of rock gold, aggry beads, and other things of the most costly nature. Those who had made themselves obnoxious to the king were sent for in succession, and put to death as they entered, "that their blood might water the graves." The whole of the night the king's executioners traversed the streets, and brought all the people they could put their hands upon to the palace, where they

were kept in confinement. The king strove to keep his purpose secret, but some one disclosed it, and he was disappointed of most of his distinguished victims, for all who could, fled the city. Next morning, being the commencement of the Adai custom, which generally brought a great number of people to Coomassie, the king found the streets empty, as, attended by his confidants and the members of his own family, he proceeded to the market to the sacrifice of sheep, &c. What followed is thus related :—

"As soon as it was dark, the human sacrifices were renewed, and, during the night, the bones of the royal deceased were removed to the sacred tomb at Baulama, to be deposited along with the remains of those who had sat upon the throne. The procession was splendid, but not numerous, the chiefs and attendants being dressed in the war costume, and preceded by torch-bearers. The sacred stools, and all the ornaments used on great occasions, were carried with them. The victims, with their hands tied behind them, and in chains, preceded the bones ; whilst, at intervals, the songs of death and victory declared the wish of the king and his chiefs to begin the war. The procession returned about three p.m. on Monday, when the king took his seat in the market-place, with his small band, and 'Death ! death ! death !' resounded on all sides. He sat with a silver goblet of palm wine in his hand, and when they cut off any head, imitated a dancing motion in his chair. A little before dark he finished his terrors for that day by retiring to the palace, and soon after the chiefs came

from their concealment and paraded the streets, rejoicing that they had escaped death, although a few days might again put them in the same fear. The sacrifices were continued till the next Adai custom, seventeen days."

What Bowditch describes other travellers have since seen, for the customs of the Ashantees have not changed for the better.

The Egbas, the people who inhabit Abbeokuta, as well as most other tribes in this division of Africa, are still in the habit of making human sacrifices, though not to the same extent as the Dahomans and Ashantees. Everywhere it would seem the victims are enriched with presents, and stupefied with intoxicating liquors, or other kinds of opiates, and charged with messages to the dead, before they are put to death.

Upon the origin of such sacrifices, they can give no satisfactory information.

But though inhabitants of a spirit world, the dead are not supposed to be always excluded from the earth; it is thought that some continue to inhabit it, occasionally in human form, but more frequently in the form of an inferior animal. But this phase of transmigration is, I think, confined to persons who are credited with supernatural powers, like the Pondoro, for instance, of the Makololo and other Zambesi tribes. Chibisa made use of this superstition for his own advancement. The tribe with which he was immediately connected believed in the Pondoro, *i.e.* the transmigration of the souls of prophetical persons. When the soul of such a one leaves the

human body, it is thought to clothe itself with the body of a lion, in which it will continue for years, when it will again appear in a human form. Chibisa declared himself to be a Pondoro, was believed, and for a time became a great man.

"In India," says Schlegel,[1] "the doctrine of transmigration of souls depends on the radical notion, that all beings derive their origin from God, and are placed in this world in an altogether degraded and unfortunate state of imperfection, from which state all beings, and particularly men, must either decline gradually into conditions of yet lower degradation, or rise gradually to conditions of purity more accordant with the divine original, according as they give ear to the vicious, or to the virtuous suggestions of their nature."

In Africa ordinary transmigration is believed in, but no such beautiful idea is connected with it; the natives believe it because, and only because, their forefathers believed it; but they are ignorant of its origin, and invest it with no spiritual meaning.

Amongst the Zulu Kaffirs it is thought that men turn into many kinds of animals, though the greater number assume the form of snakes. The snakes which become Itongo, *i.e.* spirits, are not many. There are the black and green Imamba, and the Umthlwazi, which may be either green or brown. The Imamba are supposed to be chief. They frequent open places, and their stare is that of one which

[1] "History of Literature," p. 131.

makes afraid, so that when a man sees one such, he does not approach it closely, but remains at a distance from it.

The Umthlwazi are supposed to be common people. They do not stare fiercely, they never bite any one, they are not afraid of man; for if a person sees one lying quietly, it remains until many come and look at it, and then moves slowly away. Old women are thought to turn into a kind of lizard.

"When a man dies among black men," says Umpengula Mbanda, "the grave is covered over with branches. The person to whom the dead man belongs watches the grave continually. If a son has died, the father watches the branches continually, that when they see that the branches are rotten they may be satisfied, knowing that nothing can now disturb the remains, for they are rotten. And if he observe a snake on the grave, the man who went to look at the grave says on his return, 'Oh, I have seen him to-day basking in the sun on the top of the grave.'"[1]

But should the snake not come to the home of his people, they seek the aid of a doctor of *ubulawo* (a class of medicines that are used for the purpose of removing that which causes dislike, and producing that which will cause love) to bring him to his home.

"Those snakes which are men," continues Umpengula Mbanda, "are known by their frequenting huts, and by their not eating mice, and by their not being frightened at the noise of men; they are always ob-

[1] "Religious System of the Amazulu," p. 142.

served not to be afraid of the shadow of a man; neither does a snake that is an Itongo excite fear in men, and there is no feeling of alarm as though there was a wild beast in the house; but there is a happy feeling, and it is felt that the chief of the village has come. When men see it, it is as though it said, as they look at it, 'Be not afraid, it is I.' So they are able at all times to associate with it.

"If it has been killed by some one who is ignorant, it comes to life again, and has the marks of the rod on its body by which it is killed; and complains in a dream of the treatment it has received, and after that a sin offering is sacrificed.

"This is how snakes (who are men) are distinguished. He who had a scar (as a man) is recognized by that; and he who had but one eye is recognized by the snake into which he has turned having one eye also; and another is recognized by the marks of injuries; and a lame man is known by the lameness of the snake. That is how they are known, for men usually have some marks, and the snakes into which they turn have similar marks. The man who had no marks speaks in dreams. And if it is seen that it is an Itongo, but it has no mark, it is said to be a man, but we do not know who it is. He reveals himself by speaking (in dreams). This is how they are known.

"Again, if a snake which is an Itongo lies on its back, with its belly upwards, it is a cause of alarm, and it is said something of consequence is about to happen, or the village is about to be destroyed. The

people sacrifice and pray, and go to a diviner, and he tells them why the Itongo has done as it has. They do as they are directed.

"If a snake coils around a vessel, and will not allow any one to take it, the people bring a sacrifice and worship, and it goes away.

"And if a snake which is an Itongo enters a house rapidly (that is without shame, arbitrarily, as one who has a right to do as he likes, whose will is his law), it is known to be the Itongo of a man who is alive."

Sacrifice to the Itongo is thus made. A bullock having been selected for the purpose, and brought to the appointed place, the owner of it, who is generally the head of the family, devotes it to the Itongo by crying, "There is your bullock, ye spirits of our people." Then his prayer is—"I pray for a healthy body, that I may live comfortably; and that, so-and-so, and so-and-so (mentioning by name his departed ancestors), may treat me with mercy." After which, the man appointed to this office cautiously approaches the bullock, and stabs it with a spear in the side. When the ox bellows, the owner of it rejoices, because it is thought that the spirits like to hear the voice of the cattle that are sacrificed to them, and he again mentions the departed members of his family by name, thinking they will be favourable to him because of the cries of the dying animal. After the ox is skinned, the owner takes a little blood, and a portion of the caul, and incense, and burns them in a secret place, that the spirits of his people may be gratified with the sweet savour. The flesh of the ox is then eaten, and the head and hoofs, &c. burnt.

Amongst the Bechuana tribes a belief in the transmigration of souls does not appear to exist, neither have I been able to find any trace of it amongst the Hottentots, though they certainly believe in the existence of the disembodied spirits of the dead, and are very apprehensive of their return to molest them; to avoid which, upon the death of any man, woman, or child, they will forsake the kraal in which the death occurred, believing that the dead never haunt any places but those in which they died. But to what end the soul exists out of the body they know not.

The forsaking of the hut in which a person has died is a widespread custom in Africa. It prevails amongst the tribes of the Zambezi districts. It was owing to the fear that his spirit would haunt the hut he died in, rather than from want of kindly feeling, that led the chief of the village in which Bishop Mackenzie died, to have him, in his last moments, removed from the hut which he had occupied, which was in the heart of the village and formed a portion of the chief's establishment, to another at some distance off.

The Damaras, and some other south-western tribes, the Balonda, and many other people of the interior, believe in transmigration of souls, and regard with great veneration, if they no not actually worship, various kinds of animals as the incarnations of men.

In Dahomey, it would seem that the spirits of some men are thought to be ubiquitous, for while it is firmly believed that deceased persons of all classes inhabit

after death a spirit world, it is also imagined that some at least of the king's children are but the transmigrated spirits of the old kings, to whom, however, sacrifices nevertheless continue to be offered as rulers in the world of spirits.

Perhaps the most remarkable phase of belief in transmigration of souls is found amongst the Ashantees, who think that the Kla, *i.e.* the soul of man, exists before the body; that it has had a very long existence indeed, having passed from one human body to another from remotest periods. So thoroughly has this become an article of faith with them, that when a woman finds that she is about to become a mother, she resorts to the priestly oracle, that she may obtain particulars from the Kla of her future child as to its ancestry and intended career.

Dreams are an important agency in maintaining correspondence with the spirits of the dead. The Africans implicitly believe that such communicate with them through the agency of dreams, and they attribute most of their dreams to spiritual communications. It is in vain to tell them that the vast majority of dreams are caused either by the involuntary action of the senses, the memory, and the imagination, or by the physical effects of cold, heat, &c.; they still cling to the idea that dreams are supernatural visitations, the mediums through which the spirits of the dead appear most frequently to the living, for the purpose of prediction, warning, reproof, or encouragement.

This intimate connection of dreams with warnings

from the spiritual world leads to a great deal that is ludicrous, vexatious, and horrible. Warnings come at most inconvenient times, and prevent men fulfilling their engagements; they break up alliances between tribe and tribe for the common welfare; excite suspicion against the innocent; and, according to the natural temperament of the dreamer, and the power he possesses to give effect to his nocturnal visions, are more or less mischievous. When in Africa, I saw but little of the ill effects which attend upon this superstition connected with dreams; but had the mission with which I was connected remained much longer at the place it first occupied, I believe we should have been much inconvenienced by it, for the chief of our district began to dream that the spirits of his ancestors appeared to him, and were angry with him for permitting us to live in his territory, and warned him that if he did not soon get rid of us we should get rid of him, and make ourselves masters of the country. From the power of this man we had nothing to fear, for we were stronger than he, yet he might have caused us much trouble had we continued to live with him, and his dreams had not become more favourable to us; while a man with greater strength at his command, when thus worked upon, would probably have made short work with us.

In this case there was, of course, a natural connection between the sleeping and waking thoughts of the dreamer, though he knew not and would not believe that the visions of the night were nothing but the embodiments of his own suspicions.

Bishop Callaway illustrates the effects of another phase of dreams by the story of a man who, in the visions of the night, was beaten by his elder brother for not being liberal in the sacrifice of cattle to him, which serves to show how intense is the belief of the Africans in the actual existence of the spirits of the dead; what a powerful hold it has upon their imagination; what, in their estimation, is the character and disposition of their departed brethren; what are some, at least, of the causes which lead to ancestor-worship; and, finally, what is, amongst the Zulu Kaffirs, the nature of such worship, and the character of the prayers and thanksgivings that are there offered.

A man became ill, and said, "I am ill because I have dreamed. I dreamed that my brother was beating me, and saying, 'How is it that you do no longer know that I am?' I answered him, 'I know that you are my brother. What can I do that you may see I know you?' He replied, 'When you sacrifice a bullock, you do not call on me.' I said, 'That is not so; tell me the bullock that I have killed without calling on you by your laud-giving names?' He answered, 'I wish for meat.' I refused him, saying there was no oxen in the cattle-pen. He replied, 'Though there be but one, I demand it.' And he beat me; so that when I awoke I had a pain in my side; when I tried to breathe, I could not, my breath was short; and when I tried to speak, I could not."

His friends remonstrated with the man, and urged him to sacrifice a bullock to his brother, but he was

obstinate and would not do so. He argued that his brother had an evil disposition, that he had sacrificed bullocks and goats, and had always praised him, and that he would do so no more, inasmuch as he just wanted to kill him.

But the contest between the live and the dead man became more serious. Night after night the sick man dreamed that his brother continued to reproach and to beat him, until he became so ill that he was brought nearly to death's door. For some days he held out, and thus complained of the unbrotherly conduct of the dead man :—"What prevents him from coming to me by night when I am asleep, and saying to me quietly, 'My brother, I wish so-and-so, that we may talk pleasantly with each other?' But he wrongs me. Daily I dream of him, and then awake in suffering. I say he is not a man ; he was a thing which was a wretch, which liked to fight with people."

At last, however, the sick man agreed with his friends to a compromise, and promised that if his brother left off beating him and he became well, he would kill some cattle in the morning. In the middle of the night his brother came to him, and said, "So then, my brother, you have pointed out the cattle. Will you kill them in the morning?" The sleeper assented, and the following conversation occurred between them.

Sick man : "Why do you, my brother, say to me I never call on you, whilst whenever I kill cattle I call on you by your laud-giving names ; for you were a brave, and stabbed in the conflict?"

Spirit : "Yes, yes, I say it with reason, when I wish for flesh, for when I died I left you a large village."

Sick man : "Yes, yes, my brother, you left me to inherit a large village, it is true ; but when you died and left me with it, had you killed all the cattle ?"

Spirit : "No I had not killed them all."

Sick man : "Well then, child of my father, do you tell me to destroy them all ?"

Spirit : "No, I do not tell you to destroy them all ; but I tell you to kill, that your village may be great."

Upon this the sick man awaked, and felt that he was well, the pain which was in his side being no longer there. He awaked his wife and bade her light a fire. She poured snuff into her hand and took it, and asked him how he was. He replied, "Oh ! just be quiet ; on awaking my body felt light ; I have been speaking with my brother, and I am quite well."

He then took snuff and went to sleep ; then the Itongo of his brother came again to him, and said, "See, I have cured you. Kill the cattle in the morning."

In the morning he arose, and, calling his younger brothers to him, said :—"I called you, for I am now well. My brother says he has cured me."

Then he told them to bring forward an ox and a barren cow to the upper part of the pen where he was standing, and when they had done this, he prayed, saying :—

"Well then, eat, ye people of our house. Let a

good Itongo be with us, that the very children may be well, and the people be in health."

After which he addressed his dead brother, and expressed his opinion of him in very plain terms, telling him that it was clear that he was not only a bad fellow when he was alive, but that he was also a bad fellow now that he was under ground. Having thus relieved his mind, he returned thanks, and said :—

"These are the cattle which I offer you,—there is a red ox, there is a red and white barren cow. Kill them. I say, tell me a matter kindly, that on awaking my body may be free from pain. I say, let all the Amatongo of the people of our house come here together to you, you who are fond of meat."

The cattle were slain, and all the men of the kraal assembled to ask for food; and as they ate and were satisfied, they gave thanks, saying: "We thank you, son of so-and-so. We pray that the Itongo may be propitious. When we see that it is an Itongo which makes you ill, we see that that Itongo is the wretch which is your brother."

I have indicated the prominent features of this belief, but it would take a volume to describe the many phases of it. You perceive it in all that the Africans think and do. When they eat, they frequently set aside a portion of their food for those that are gone; when they drink, they will pour out a portion of their good cheer as a libation to the departed; when they go a journey, they invoke the aid of the spirits; when they return home, they thank them;

before war and during warfare, in victory or in defeat, they crave and recognize their influence; in any doubt, trouble, or difficulty, they trust to their inspiration rather than to their own capacity; and they credit them with the issue of most of their transactions. This description, of course, refers to the unsophisticated natives, for many of those who have been brought into communication with the Europeans, have lost faith in much that their forefathers believed, though they have accepted nothing else instead. They do not, however, always trust to the spontaneous action of the spirits, but have devised means whereby they may be moved to take an interest in the affairs of the living; which proceedings may be included in what is generally known as witchcraft.

CHAPTER IV.

CONCERNING WITCHCRAFT.

By witchcraft is meant the practices of men and women who are supposed to have dealings with the spiritual world, and thereby gain preternatural powers, which are exercised sometimes for the good, but more commonly for the injury of mankind. Efforts to obtain such powers from spiritual agencies have been made by men from earliest times. Originally such efforts may have been made with no evil design, but from a sense of spiritual need, and with the view of supplying the wants and necessities of our nature. Such witchcraft, practised for a good end, involved, probably, no immorality in its ceremonies, for the spiritual agencies evoked were avowedly good and beneficent. But when the primitive tradition regarding the ministration of angels, with other primeval revelations, was corrupted or forgotten, this comparatively innocent method of seeking the aid of the invisible world became little more than a theory; for the purposes of witchcraft are now generally wicked; its processes generally involve moral guilt; the spirits invoked are, for the most part, avowedly evil and maleficent.

The Cainites are said to have been the first to have engaged themselves in a close and exclusive communication with the agencies of spiritual evil. According to ancient traditions, their impiety consisted not in the denial of God's existence, but in a daring violation of His precepts, and in rebelling against His authority by allying themselves, through the agency of an unholy magic, with "the rulers of the darkness of this world," "the spiritual wickedness in high places." Consequently, their sin was in its character like that attributed to the infernal powers with whom they sought alliance—"the angels who kept not their first estate." The race of Ham is supposed to have perpetuated many of the traditions of the Cainites, and to have preserved some fragments of their magical arts, the traces of which are found in the superstitious rites which prevail amongst the heathen everywhere.

I do not assert the correctness of these suppositions, though I am inclined to believe that there is a larger amount of truth in them than is commonly imagined. It is certain that the Egyptians excelled all other people in the science of magic; and that the Africans generally have been, and still are, above all other races of men, perhaps, devoted to witchcraft.

In Africa there is what is regarded as a lawful as well as an unlawful witchcraft, the lawful being practised professedly for the welfare of mankind, and in opposition to the unlawful, which is resorted to for man's injury.

I do not think that these antagonistic supernatural

powers are thought to be derived from the same source. The wicked wizards and witches are supposed to be in communication with spiritual agencies that are hostile to man, and which are not only superhuman, but demons, *i.e.* devils; the prophets, or witch-doctors, or medicine-men, as they are variously designated, are properly necromancers, *i.e.* those who practise divination by means of the dead, who gain their power by holding converse with the disembodied spirits of men, which are not supposed to be so generally hostile to the welfare of man as the evil spirits. The former class of wizards and witches, it is true, are thought to have some dealings with dead men, and especially with dead wizards, but their capacity for this proceeds, I imagine, from their supposed intercourse with spirits that never were human.

In other parts of the world this difference between what is called black and white magic is recognized, though it may not be accounted for in the same way.

Belief in witchcraft leads to an unreasonable fear of supernatural powers, and this fear sometimes shows itself in an almost implicit reverence for the supposed agents of the evil spirits, but more frequently in a malignant desire for their destruction. The Africans become monsters of inhumanity when their feelings are excited against the wizards and the witches.

Schweinfurth says that, amongst the Bongo, "all the old people of either sex, but especially the old women, are exposed to the suspicion of allying themselves to wicked spirits, for the purpose of effecting the injury and detriment of others. Old folks, so the

Bongo maintain, wander through the forest-glades at night, and have only to secure the proper roots, and then they may apparently be lying calmly in their huts, while in reality they are taking counsel with the spirits of mischief how they can best bring their neighbours to death and destruction. Whenever any case of sudden death occurs, the aged people are held responsible, and nothing, it is taken for granted, could be more certain than that a robust man, except he were starved, would not die. Woe to the old man or woman, then, in whose house the suspected herbs and roots are found! Though they be the father or the mother, they have no chance of escape."[1]

That the old, amongst a brutish, ignorant, heathen people, should be thus exposed to suspicion of dealings with the powers of evil is natural enough; and that the belief of the Bongo in their malignant powers is, in most instances, genuine, I do not doubt; but for selfish and wicked purposes, here, as in other parts of Africa, many are accused of the forbidden art who, it is well known, are innocent of practising it. There is no belief of the Africans that is turned to worse purposes by those who profess to be actuated by a zeal for the welfare of the community. Chiefs and others will employ the witch-doctors to denounce as guilty of witchcraft those who have become obnoxious to them, or whose property they covet; and the witch-doctors themselves are under strong temptations, which they rarely resist, to accuse people who have incurred their ill-will. Nevertheless, a belief in the supernatural force of witchcraft is deeply rooted in

[1] "The Heart of Africa," vol. i. p. 307.

the minds of the Africans. If a man has an enemy, he will go to a professor of witchcraft to get him bewitched. If a man is troubled with any strange physical sensation, or meets with any accident, or sustains any loss, he believes that his enemy has caused it by witchcraft. If a man dies from any but the most obvious causes, it is thought that his death has been caused by the black art; and if once a man suspects that he is bewitched, his fears make such havoc in his constitution that he will probably die, unless the witch-doctor succeeds to his satisfaction in breaking the charm.

Captains Speke and Grant give several illustrations of the effects of belief in witchcraft amongst the tribes they visited, and of the methods resorted to for giving relief to the bewitched.

The Wanyamuezi are said to be less superstitious than most other Central African tribes, yet, in common with almost all other Africans, they believe that illness is caused by witchcraft. For instance, a man died suddenly, his wife was accused of having caused his death by witchcraft, probably because she had been heard to threaten him with it; and was tried, convicted of the crime, and put to death. The justice of her punishment was supposed to be confirmed by the fact that when her body was thrown into the bush, the hyenas refused to touch it.

A daughter of the Sultan (as he is called) of the Wanyamuezi was thought to be possessed by an evil spirit, through the agency of witchcraft, and Captain Grant describes the exorcism used on this occasion. The Sultan sat at the doorway of his hut.

His daughter, the demoniac, sat opposite to him, veiled and guarded by two women armed with spears. Pombé, the native beer, was first of all thrown into the air so as to fall upon the bewitched woman, and her attendants. A cow was then brought forward having its mouth so tightly bound up as almost to prevent the possibility of its breathing. One of the spear-bearers gave the cow two gentle taps with a hatchet between the horns, the demoniac and the other spear-bearer did the same. Then the witch-doctor, with the same hatchet, killed the animal by a blow behind the horns. The blood was caught in a tray, and placed at the feet of the woman with the evil spirit. Then one of her female attendants sprinkled her forehead, her neck, the palms of her hands, and her insteps with blood. The Sultan, his kindred, and his household, all her relatives indeed, who were present, were similarly anointed; and each, after being sprinkled, wished her a happy deliverance from her bewitchment. She then rose from her seat and went to her hut, making a plaintive wail as she went along.

At intervals during the day the demoniac walked about the village carrying a wand in her hand, and attended by several women, shaking gourds containing grain, and singing. Now and then an old woman, seemingly appointed to that office, wrestled with her for the possession of the wand, but did not succeed in getting it from her.

Towards sunset she appeared in ordinary attire, but with her face curiously painted. She sat in front of her hut and received offerings of grain, and

of beads and armlets, with which she adorned the wand,—a magic rod, probably. This ceremony being concluded, she paraded the village with a number of women, who laughed and sang, and made merry to their hearts' content, for the evil spirit had been vanquished, and compelled to fly.

The Wanyoro, who live to the north of the Victoria Nyanza, practise witchcraft extensively; but it was with the lawful practice of it that Captain Speke and his companion traveller seem to have become most acquainted. Their prophets are held in high estimation, and are looked upon principally as diviners. Some of the predictions of these men are noteworthy. For example, one of them, a man in Captain Speke's service, told him that the expedition would succeed, but that his familiar demon required one man's life, and another man's illness. This prediction was thus fulfilled,—one of the escort was murdered, and Captain Grant had a serious illness. When in Uganda this man announced that this same demon required the life of another man, and not long after a man belonging to the expedition was killed. A third time, when in Unyoro, he saw the demon, who required no more lives, but said the expedition would be long delayed; and this proved to be the case.

These magicians of Unyoro are, like their brethren elsewhere, cunning observers of the course of events, and, it is probable, do not scruple to use means to bring to pass the fulfilment of their prediction. They fill more than one office; their gifts are not exercised only in the discovery of wizards and witches, in breaking spells, and in predicting the issues of enter-

prises, warlike or peaceful; they also profess to be able to detect offenders against social order and honesty, and to discover lost property.

On one occasion Captain Speke lost a rain-gauge and its bottle; seemingly it had been stolen, and, of course, no one could be found to own to the theft. The chief was troubled, and sent his own magician to search for the missing property. The adept was an old purblind man, and his instrument of divination was a cow's horn, primed with a magic powder, from the mouth of which was suspended an iron bell. The captain says: "The old creature jingled his bell, entered our hut, squatted on his hams, looked first at me, then at the others, inquired what the missing things were like, grunted, moved his skinny arm round his head as if desirous of catching air from all four sides of the hut, then dashed the accumulated air on the head of his horn; smelled it to see if all was going right; jingled the bell again close to his ear, and grunted his satisfaction; the missing articles must be found.

"To carry out the incantation more effectually, however, all my men were sent for to sit in the open before the hut, but the old doctor rose, shaking his horn and tinkling the bell close to his ear. He then, confronting one of the men, dashed the horn forward as if intending to strike him on the face, then smelt the head (of the horn), then dashed at another, and so on, till he became satisfied that my men were not the thieves.

"He then walked into Grant's hut, inspected that, and finally went to the place where the bottle had

been kept. Then he walked about the grass with his arm up, and jingling the bell to his ear, first on one side, then on the other, till the track of a hyæna gave him the clue, and in two or three steps he found it."

In this case everybody was satisfied. Evidently the thief was the hyæna who had carried off the rain-gauge and its bottle, and had dropped it in the grass! The traveller was too prudent to express any doubt of this, and gratified the chief by making him a present of the recovered property, and rewarded the old magician by giving him a goat.

It will be seen from this that there, as elsewhere, witchcraft assumes many features of expression.

I once had an opportunity of becoming acquainted with the way in which the Marganja medicine-men employ their supposed supernatural powers in the detection of offenders. Property was stolen, the loser of it complained to the chief, who employed a celebrated magician to discover the thief. At the time appointed for this discovery, a large number of people assembled outside the village, and ranged themselves in a circle. The magician was a wild-looking man about forty years of age, and, according to the custom of his fraternity, was fantastically attired. He was accompanied by several young men and a boy, who were his pupils in the art of magic. He commenced proceedings by producing two divining-rods about four feet long, and of the thickness of an ordinary broom-handle. With these he worked wondrously for a short time, twisting and twirling them about, and at the same time making unintelligible ejaculations. Then he called four of the

young men to him, and with much ceremony delivered the rods to them, appointing two to each rod. They received the rods with seeming fear, and placed themselves in the centre of the circle formed by the lookers on. Then from a capacious goatskin bag the magician took a zebra-tail, which he gave to another young man, and a calabash containing a few peas, which he gave to the boy. He then commenced to roll himself about in a hideous fashion, and to utter strange and seemingly supplicatory sounds. After which he walked slowly round and round the young men with the rods, followed by the man with the zebra-tail, and the boy with the calabash. Presently he quickened his pace; he ran and leaped; he threw his arms about wildly, and shouted and shrieked, and his followers imitated him. For a few minutes the holders of the rods were apparently unmoved by these proceedings, then they had spasmodic twitchings of the arms and legs, which rapidly increased in violence until their whole bodies were painfully convulsed. In their agony they foamed at the mouth, and their eyes seemed to be projected from their sockets. They appeared to be struggling with the divining-rods, which at length appeared to obtain the mastery, and whirled them round and round with great rapidity. But suddenly they dashed through the people, and ran into the bush, heeding no obstacle, and being cruelly torn by the thorns. When they returned, they were bleeding profusely from the wounds they had received. Their excitement had not abated; it was unnaturally intense; they realized to the full my idea of the effects

of demoniacal possession. Again they were whirled round, and again they rushed off; this time towards the village, which they entered, and, after dashing at various huts, fell down, almost dead from exhaustion, at the hut of one of the concubines of the chief. She was thus declared to be the thief. She denied the theft; but the medicine-man said: "The spirit has said she is guilty—the spirit never lies." Nevertheless, the woman persisted in declaring that she was innocent; and, to establish her innocence, appealed to the ordeal of poisoned water, which, being permitted, pronounced her guiltless. Upon this the magician, to whom, be it said, the preparation of the ordeal water had *not* been entrusted, shrugged his shoulders, and left the village. But though his proceedings were made abortive by the ordeal, I do not think that in the estimation of the natives his reputation as a magician was impaired; and I am not surprised at this, for I must confess that I found it difficult to get over the impression that the rod-holders were for the time being under supernatural influence.

At Zanzibar every phase of witchcraft seems to find place with the representatives of the various tribes that are now living there, and the wizards and witches, though slaves, like the rest of the natives, seem to have lost none of their power, and practise their art as freely as though they were in their own homes in the interior. Some of these people are supposed to have particular spirits under their control, which bring on their victims special forms of disease. "Such a one," says Bishop Steere, "is Kizuka. In order to obtain the services of Kizuka, certain forms must be

observed, and certain herbs gathered, and then a defined number of pots are turned face downwards in a row. At the proper time the pots are taken up, and the Kizuka is seen under one of them in the shape of a one-eyed toad, or other hideous thing. It then becomes the master's business to point out to the Kizuka a person to destroy; it enters its victim unawares, and causes a dry and burning internal pain, and so disorders the whole system that (if he be not dispossessed) he soon dies. Another victim must then be pointed out to it, or the Kizuka will enter its own master and destroy him."

This feature of witchcraft was believed in by the tribes in the Shire Highlands, and more than one instance came under my own notice of persons who thought themselves thus bewitched.

The Rev. L. J. Procter, one of my colleagues in Africa, received the following account of the evil deeds and punishment of a wizard, from Damanji, a man belonging to the Ajawa, or Waion, or Yao tribe (for it seems they are thus differently distinguished), who was living under the protection of the missionaries, having been rescued by them from the slave-dealers.

Chimaliro, the nephew of an Ajawa chief named Jamrima, after repeated attacks of sickness, died. His sickness and death was attributed to the secret machinations of a wizard or a witch, and after resorting to the usual methods of discovery, the witch-doctor of the district denounced Jalawi, a neighbouring chief, whose powers as a magician were thought to be great, as the criminal. Jalawi, finding that denial of

the crime was useless, offered a little girl as an atonement for his offence. The uncle of the dead man was not satisfied with this compensation, and assembling his people, went to Jalawi's place in order to seize him. The culprit could not be found in the village, but a voice was heard to say :—" I see you, I see you ; I know you want to kill me." The wizard, it was thought, had made himself invisible ; and Damanji declared in all sincerity that on several occasions he thus eluded those who went to apprehend him. But one day he was surprised and made a prisoner ; and as the proofs of his guilt were thought to be overwhelming, he was, without being permitted to appeal to the ordeal of poisoned water, condemned to torture and death. While under torture, he made a full confession of all he had done to kill Chimaliro. Said he, " If you look in the roof of Chimaliro's hut, you will find magic horns ; if you look in such and such trees, you will find some more ; and I placed others under the threshold of his door."

The horns were found in the places which he had indicated, and with them, to add to the potency of the spell, were discovered three human toes. A pile of wood was then raised outside Jalawi's village, upon which he was placed, and after being surrounded, and then completely covered with additional bundles of wood, the whole was set on fire, and he was thus burned alive ; burning being the usual punishment of wizards and witches in this part of Africa. That Damanji believed in this man's guilt is certain.

These magic horns, be it said, are those of goats and antelopes, which are filled with certain com-

pounds of oil and fat (human substances probably), and a powder made from the bark and roots of certain trees and plants which are supposed to possess magical properties, the evil power of which is firmly believed in by the natives.

It is rarely, however, that a man or a woman is put to death by the Ajawa, Manganja, and other kindred tribes, without being permitted to appeal to the ordeal of the *muavi*, or poisoned water. They are a kindly-natured people upon the whole, and unless specially excited against an individual, are by no means vindictive. So the *muavi* is in constant requisition, and frequently its virtue is so impaired by some good-natured friend that offenders escape the punishment accorded to their crimes by a previous tribunal. According to the popular belief, the accused person, if guilty, will, on drinking the *muavi*, experience vertigo, and fall down in a swoon; but if innocent, he will reject the poisonous compound by vomiting, and no harm will happen to him. This ordeal is found in many parts of Africa: it is not the only one; there are many of different kinds; for where witchcraft is believed in, such final tests of innocence or guilt are almost invariably resorted to. The only parts of Africa where it is not permitted, so far as I am at present advised, are Kaffraria and Zululand; and of all the various races of Africa the Zulu Kaffirs are probably the strongest believers in witchcraft.

There is scarcely an ill that can befall mankind which the Zulus and Kaffirs do not believe to be caused by supernatural agency, and generally by witchcraft. They distinguish between illness and

misfortunes that are caused by the arbitrary action of offended spirits, and those evils that are produced by the spirits being worked upon by some wizard or witch. In the first instance, as I have shown, the spirits are propitiated by sacrifices of cattle, &c.; in the second, death, without benefit of application to any ordeal, is the lot of the individual denounced by the prophet, or, as he is more commonly called by ourselves, witch-doctor.

The prophets play an important part in all the religious rites and observances of the Kaffirs; they communicate with the spirits of the departed in order to ascertain their wishes; they are diviners, charm-manufacturers, and rain-makers; but their great occupation is the detection of those who practise witch-craft.

A prophet must be the descendant of a prophet, not necessarily a son, though it is not all the descendants of a prophet that are qualified for the office, which is hedged in with many rites and ceremonies. A long and arduous preparation has to be made. The African prophets and priests of all kinds frequently have to pass their noviciate, like those of Egypt in olden times, in the wilderness, and to endure all the trials of a most rigid asceticism. Many break down under the discipline, which, when successfully endured, does not always procure admission into the sacred confraternity, for a council of seers have, finally, to decide if he is really the possessor of the supernatural afflatus.

Mr. Wood says: "When first the spirit of prophecy manifests itself to a Kaffir, he begins by losing

all his interest in the events of every-day life. He becomes depressed in mind, prefers solitude to company, often has fainting fits, and, what is most extraordinary of all, loses his appetite. He is visited by dreams of an extraordinary character, mainly relating to serpents, lions, leopards, and other wild beasts. Day by day he becomes more and more possessed, until the perturbations of the spirit manifest themselves openly.

"In this stage of his novitiate, the future prophet utters terrible yells, leaps here and there with astonishing vigour, and runs about at full speed, leaping and shrieking all the time. When thus excited he will dart into the bush, catch snakes (which an ordinary Kaffir will not touch), tie them round his neck, boldly fling himself into the water, and perform all kinds of insane feats.

"This early stage of the prophet's life is called by the Kaffirs *Twasa*, a word which signifies the change of the old moon to the new, and the change of winter to spring in the beginning of the year. During its progress, the head of his house is supposed to feel great pride in the fact that a prophet is to be numbered among the family, and to offer sacrifices for the success of a novice. When the preliminary stage is over, the future prophet goes to some old and respected seer, gives him a goat as a fee, and remains under his charge until he has completed the necessary course of instruction." [1]

If the council decides in his favour, he assumes

[1] Wood's "Natural History of Man," p. 138.

the dress and character of a prophet, and if he succeed in his office he will rise to an almost unbounded power among his tribe. But should he be unsuccessful in his ventures he will meet with the fate universally accorded to the unsuccessful—contempt, and perhaps ill-usage and death.

Making allowance for the different habits and characteristics of the various tribes, the foregoing account fairly describes the process of prophet, witch-doctor, or medicine-man making in Africa. I have, when living with the Manganja, seen the *Sinanga*, or medicine-men, in every stage of their career, though I cannot say that I have seen them handle serpents as the Kaffir prophets do; they seemed to be as much afraid of such creatures as their less mystical brethren.

There are prophetesses as well as prophets in almost every tribe, and the women go through a series of ceremonies in order to qualify them for the office, similar to those prescribed for the men; and, like the men, they are thought to be capable of transmitting to their descendants the supernatural powers which they themselves possess.

When not engaged professionally, they perform the ordinary duties of life, whether they be married or single, much as other women do; and, so far from celibacy being considered a necessary qualification for the sacred office, it is very rarely that you meet with a man or woman holding it who is not married.

Amongst the Zulu-Kaffirs so deeply rooted is the idea that all sickness is caused by witchcraft, that, if any one of them expressed a doubt about this, it

would afford them good grounds for believing that the doubter was himself a wizard. Amongst these people the charms, which are thought to cause ill-health and death, are certain kinds of roots, tufts of hair, feathers, bones, &c., which must have been in the possession of the victim, or, at least, have been touched by him. These are buried in some secret spot by the wizard, who mutters over them certain spells, by means of which the victim droops in health, in proportion as the buried charms decay in the ground. The object of the witch-doctor is, first, to point out the wizard or witch; and, secondly, to discover the buried charms, in order that the spell may lose its potency.

If a chief be ill, to suppose that his illness is caused by anything but witchcraft would be a sort of high treason, and a day, therefore, is appointed for the discovery of the evil-doer. All the people of the neighbourhood are then assembled, none daring to absent themselves for fear of being suspected, and form themselves into a circle, squatting on the ground, after the manner of the Kaffirs, and, be it said, Africans generally.

The prophet who has been retained for the occasion, then begins to pace slowly in a circle, uttering at the same time a low chant. Gradually he increases his speed, raises his voice higher, until at length he breaks into a furious dance, and he rends the air with his piercing cries. This goes on until he has lashed himself into what seems to be a state of insane fury. His eyes roll wildly, tears stream down his cheeks, his singing is interrupted by shrieks and sobs, and to

all appearance he is a demoniac. The crisis is now at hand. The prophet leaps and bounds over the ground, first rushing to one part of the circle, then to another, inhaling his breath violently, like a dog trying to discover a lost scent, and apparently attracted to or repelled from individuals by a power not his own. The people are trembling with fear and awe, no one knowing who will be accused, and each, possibly, afraid of being denounced. At length the choice is made. The prophet stops suddenly, sniffs violently, draws nearer and nearer as if supernaturally impelled to the object of his search, makes a dash forward, snatches his wand of office from his belt, touches the doomed man with it, and runs off. The man thus denounced is at once arrested by the executioners, who are always in attendance on these occasions, and carried to the chief to be examined. In the meantime the prophet proceeds to discover the buried charms. He dances through the kraal, visiting hut after hut, and seemingly trying by the sense of smell to find out where the evil things are hidden. At length he approaches the spot, at which he thrusts his assagai, and then bids the people to dig, and in doing so they find the charms.

The accused person has no hope of mercy, and generally yields himself with what fortitude he can command to his fate. Should he persist in denying his guilt, he is tortured in order to make him confess. If he admit it, torture almost invariably precedes his execution; indeed in most cases the poor wretch is tortured to death. Burning torches are applied to the most sensitive parts of his body; or he is

pierced repeatedly with long needles; and finally a hole is broken in a nest of large, fierce ants, the venom of whose bite is agonizing, and, bound hand and foot, he is thrust into the interior, or fastened to the ground close to the upturned nest, so that the ants may swarm upon him.

It must not be thought that the Kaffirs are naturally vindictive or cruel, for they are not; but they will inflict with savage energy indescribable tortures on their nearest relatives, or dearest friends, if found guilty of witchcraft.

It is customary with Europeans to regard the witch-doctors generally as impostors, and to say that they simply point out men who are for some reason disliked by the chief, or whose property he covets, and that they themselves are guilty of secreting the charms which they profess to find. That some of them will take bribes to accuse innocent persons of witchcraft, and that they frequently use the terrible power which they undoubtedly possess for the gratification of personal revenge, there is every reason to believe; yet I do not think that they are always conscious impostors, or prostitute their supposed supernatural gifts for the mere sake of gain. Many, I feel sure, although they may be occasionally guilty of the crimes thus laid to their charge, believe that they are supernaturally directed; at the same time there is not a shadow of a doubt that their natural quickness, and largely developed faculties of observation, help them to their dicisions to an extent of which they themselves may not be aware. They have not created the belief in witchcraft, they are but the

offspring of such belief. The people generally believe in it firmly, and many of them to gratify their evil designs and vindictive dispositions, practise it, in the full conviction that they can bring sickness and death, and sorrow and misfortune by its agency upon those whom they regard as their enemies. When people of bad tempers or revengeful dispositions are offended by any one, they commonly threaten, with a curse, to bewitch the offender. Such threats form part of the almost every day vocabulary of the Africans in all parts of the continent.

The wizards and witches are supposed to obtain their supernatural power much in the same way that the witch-doctors, &c. obtain theirs, only they avowedly have intercourse with evil spirits, and with bad objects in view. When a man of a naturally bad disposition is disappointed in his projects, or is jealous of the prosperity of others, or grows melancholy, or is desperate through misfortune, he will, probably, withdraw himself from the company of other men, and live a solitary wild-beast sort of life in the woods, where it is thought the evil spirits come to him, show him what herbs and roots are used in enchantments, and also teach him the gestures, grimaces, and words proper for devilish practices.

There is one form of witchcraft in which the Kaffirs and Zulus believe, which resembles some of the superstitions of Europe in the Middle Ages. They believe that the wizards have the power of transforming the dead body of a human being into a familiar of their own.

The wizard watches where people are buried, and

when he finds a body upon which he can work his spell without fear of discovery, he, at midnight, digs up the corpse, and, by means of his incantations, breathes a sort of life into it, which enables it to move and speak; it being thought that the spirit of some dead wizard has taken possession of it. He then burns a hole in the head, and through the aperture extracts the tongue. Further spells have the effect of changing this revivified body into the form of some animal, such as a hyena, an owl, or a wild cat; the latter being most in favour. This creature then becomes the wizard's servant, and obeys him in all things. The chief use, however, to which it is put, is to inflict sickness and death upon persons who are disliked by its master; and in the dead of the night it will visit the houses of such, and cry woe against the doomed individuals. The trembling inmates hear the voice, but none dare venture out for fear of being involved in the malediction.

In consequence of this belief, it is said that no Kaffir or Zulu ever dares to be seen in communication with any animals but those that are domesticated. Any attempt to tame a wild animal would expose the person who made it to the suspicion of being a wizard, and he would most likely be denounced as such.

That cattle are bewitched, that people through the agency of witchcraft are killed by lightning and other natural phenomena, is firmly believed by the Zulu Kaffirs; and every other phase of witchcraft, probably, that is to be found elsewhere finds a place with them. At present it is to be feared that in Zululand

the evils attendant upon belief in witchcraft have not in any degree diminished. The witch-doctors are always at work, and the number of executions for witchcraft seems to be on the increase. In Kaffraria, however, where the influence of Europeans is more strongly felt, and the work of the missionaries is wider spread, this belief is losing power, and the craft of the witch-doctor is not in such great requisition.

Amongst the Bechuana tribes, witchcraft, though believed in, is not so powerful for evil as amongst the Zulu Kaffirs; and, their country being subject to droughts, the prophets are more frequently employed in rain-making than in "smelling out" wizards and witches.

The Hottentots of the Cape, having been thrown into confusion by the Dutch and other Europeans, do not exhibit their belief in witchcraft, as they did in days gone by, though it is probably still living amongst them. What their notions were concerning the "black art," Kolben shows:—"All sudden inward pain," says he, "all sicknesses that baffle their physicians, and cut off before old age; all cross accidents; and every artificial performance that is above their comprehension, the Hottentots ascribe to witchcraft; an art which they believe is taught by their *Touqûoa*, or Devil; and under the imputation of which their old women, like ours, suffer more than any others.

"When a Hottentot is seized with a pain, which he believes is caused by witchcraft, he sends for the physician of his kraal, who is believed to be master

of an amulet that will sometimes dissolve the charms of the witches. On his arrival, and before he utters a syllable to the patient, a sound fat sheep being killed at the instant, he takes and carefully views the caul all over; and having prepared it with *Bucher*, twists it in the manner of a rope, and hangs it about the patient's neck, to whom, while he is doing this, he generally says,—"You will soon be better. The witchcraft is not strong upon you."

This caul the patient is obliged to wear while a bit of it will hang about the neck. If the patient be a man, the men of the kraal feast upon the carcase of the sheep; if a woman, the women; if a child, the carcase is served up to the children of the kraal only; and none else taste a bit of it.

"If upon this the patient does not grow better, the docter thinks no more of an amulet, but gives physic. And be the distemper, or the course of it, what it may, the doctor first called in, and no other, must be retained quite through till the patient recovers or dies. If the event is death, the doctor affirms it was occasioned by witchcraft; and that the charms of the witch or wizard were too strong for him or any one else to break.

"It does not at all appear, however, and I believe it is not, that the Hottentots have any notion of their wizards or witches entering into any compact with the devil, so that their souls go to him at death, as have many among ourselves of such, whether real or imaginary. They conceive, according to all intelligence I could get upon the matter, that the malice of

Touquôa is confined to this world, and cannot act beyond it." [1]

What their methods of discovering wizards and witches were, Kolben does not say, neither does he mention the punishment awarded to them when discovered; but from other sources it can be gathered, that the witch-doctors proceeded much in the same way as the fraternity elsewhere, and that death, frequently preceded by torture, was the penalty of witchcraft.

Amongst the Korrannas and Namaquas, who have succeeded in maintaining an independence of foreign control, save in the differences which their lively fancies have made in the methods resorted to in order to ascertain the guilt or innocence of accused persons, belief in witchcraft corresponds in its character to that described by Kolben.

Throughout South-western Africa, the tribes, without exception, are as great believers in witchcraft now as they were three hundred years ago. How firmly this belief had possession of the minds of the natives of Southern Guinea in the time of Father Merolla, we learn from his account of his experience in Congo, and several other countries in Southern Africa. At that period—towards the end of the 17th century—the Roman Catholic missionaries had great power in these regions, and they used it against wizards and witches with a zeal as unrelenting as that which Saul displayed when he "cut off those that have familiar

[1] "The Present State of the Cape of Good Hope," i. 134.

spirits, and the wizards out of the land." Indeed their zeal savoured so strongly of cruel persecution, that it raised up obstacles to the progress of Christianity, which, I think, were never intended to exist. Merolla tells us of a certain king of Congo, who having become a Christian, immediately caused a proclamation to be made (being instigated thereto by the missionaries), that within a certain time all wizards should depart his dominions, or suffer death for their neglect. "These wicked wretches," says the Father, "incited his subjects to a rebellion against him, which at length increased to such a degree, that they ran like madmen to the palace with weapons in their hands to assail their prince." The king escaped his subjects' wrath on this occasion, but fell into their hands afterwards, and was killed. Driven to bay by the proceedings taken against them by the missionaries, it is no wonder that the wizards used their great influence with the people against the new religion, and stirred up strife against the chiefs who became agents in the attempts to extirpate them by deeds as cruel as those which their own evil practices encouraged.

Father Merolla was, on one occasion, afraid that an accident such as befell one of his brother missionaries, Philip da Salesia, might happen to him, and he thus records that accident:—"After the death of the pious Don Alvaro, king of Congo (it was the custom of the Portuguese thus to designate the native kings), a new king was chosen, who was no less zealous and devout than his predecessor. This prince, putting out a proclamation to have all wizards that should be

found within his dominions burnt, those wicked wretches, gathering together in the dukedom of Sundi, still persisted to exercise their damnable callings in their huts, notwithstanding the prohibition. To prevent this, the duke's forces marched thither in great haste, carrying along with them the aforesaid Father. Being arrived at the place, they began to set fire to the huts. As soon as the wizards perceived the flames about their ears, they came out in great fury; whereat the duke's people immediately fled, leaving the poor father to shift for himself. The wizards perceiving him alone, soon seized, and murdered, and devoured him, both to satisfy their revenge and appetite." And as they barely escaped being roasted to death, as they probably rightly thought, through the instigation of the missionary, I am not surprised at the "accident" which happened to the Father.

The journals of the missionaries at this period are largely occupied with narratives of their proceedings against the magicians, whose conversion they do not seem to have sought, but whose death they strove for with unflagging animosity.

Father Merolla, a benevolent man, and a merciful man in all other respects, shows the disposition of a wizard in his denunciations of the professors of the black art, whom he evidently regards as absolute devils, rather than as poor deluded human beings capable of being won to Christ by deeds of mercy and love, and having souls to be saved, like the rest of mankind. He rejoices when he hears of the execution of any of them. Being invited to visit Cacongo, he

stipulated with the king that, in order to lay a surer foundation of the Christian religion in his country, all, or at least the chief of the magicians and wizards of the kingdom should meet him and defend their opinions and oppose his own; and that, should they decline to meet him "on account of ignorance," he might have the opportunity of exercising his sacerdotal power on their charms, "and thereby show that the performances of Christian ministers are always above those of the devils." Fearing the fate that overtook the prophets of Baal, who accepted the invitation of Jehu, the magicians and wizards declined to meet Father Merolla, and he does not inform us what effect his sacerdotal power had on their charms.

The pitting the supernatural power of the priesthood against that of the wizards, and the consequent temptation to claim miraculous victories in the contests that frequently came to pass, proved in the end disastrous to the cause of Christianity, as represented by Father Merolla, in the regions of the Congo.

Being earnestly invited to stay at a town of Loango, he consented, and thus records his experience :—

"The same hour of my arrival I began to baptize near a house where the mistress was in bed. In the court of this house were planted several gourds with leaves like unto ours, but the fruit was green and pulpy, and of an excellent taste. This court being not well able to contain the great concourse of people that thronged thither, they must necessarily exceedingly trample the woman's ground. She began to bawl out therefore as if she was mad, but the people taking little or no notice of her, crowded rather the

closer. Whilst I was administering the holy sacrament of baptism, this woman cried out with greater vehemence than before, which caused me to hold out my staff to her wherewith I supported myself, being scarce able to stand, to make her quiet, not knowing at the time that she was the real mistress of the house. When she, either taking that sign for a threat, a thing always abhorred by me, or else moved by some other wicked design, catched up a spade angrily, and fell to digging round her ground where the people were (an action always superstitiously observed by them) without anybody so much as speaking a word against it. After she had so done, she began to howl again as if she had been bewitched. I, perceiving her to persist in her obstinacy, made the same sign to her as before to be quiet, whereupon she ran as hard as she could drive to call a witch to bewitch me; as she ran along she cried to herself, 'What, shall a stranger abuse a native? Must I be drove out of my own house by I know not who? No, no, if I cannot get him away by fair means, I will have his soul out of his body by foul.' She soon appeared again, bringing along with her a witch and a scholar of hers. As soon as the people were gone, these two laid themselves down on the ground, leaning against a wall. I knew them well enough to be what they were by the fashion of their clothes. On their heads they had a piece of cloth folded round like a turban, so that one eye only was to be seen; with this the old witch looked steadfastly upon me for some time, grumbling after a brutish manner to herself all the while. Then with her hand she

proceeded to scrape a small hole in the ground. At the sight of this I immediately ordered my interpreter to be gone, being more concerned for him than myself; for, as a priest that had always trusted in God, I doubted not but to render her charms ineffectual to myself. I commanded the devil that he should not come near; but she, little regarding what I did, went on with her sorceries. I ordered the evil spirits a second time to be gone, which she perceiving, giving her scholar a lusty slap over the face, she bid her begone and leave her alone. At my third command she departed also, but returned next morning betimes, practising over her devilish acts as before. I resolved not to stand long in one place, whereby to avoid the design she had to bewitch me to death, that having been the reason of her making a hole in the earth. It seems their custom is, that when they have a mind to bewitch any one mortally, they put a certain herb or plant into the hole they have so dug, which, as it perishes and decays, so the vigour and spirits of the person they have a design upon will fail and decay. I went down to the river-side, a little way distant, whither the witch followed me. When I had gone down thrice, endeavouring all along to avoid her, and finding I could not, I sat me down by the water-side. This the hag perceiving, she likewise squatted herself down over against me. The people being curious to know what would be the event of this contest, had hid themselves in an adjoining field of millet, which grew about ten or twelve hands high, which I knew nothing of. Whilst I was thus sitting, and observing that vile wretch near me, it put me in mind of the

saying of the wise man: 'A wicked woman is a deadly wound.' Then I addressed myself to God, saying, 'O Lord, the cause is Thine, Thy honour lies at stake, and so much the rather by reason that the inhabitants of this island are but very little acquainted with Thee! As for me, I am but a worm in respect of Thy majesty. Do Thou work in me, for without Thee I can do nothing.' This said, I commanded her once more in the name of the Blessed Trinity and the holy Virgin to be gone, and withal blowing gently towards her, she all of a sudden giving three leaps, and howling thrice, fled away in a trice. The swiftness of her motions were so extraordinary, that they were wondered at by all that saw them, and thought impossible to be performed by any human power. When the witch began to fly, the people came forth of their holes, and running after her with several reproachful exclamations, cried out, 'The devil is fled and the priest not moved: the devil take all witches and witchcraft.' I being surprised at the hearing of so great a number of voices in my favour, gave immediate thanks to the Supreme Disposer of all things, and more especially when I heard them cry further, 'God prosper Christianity! God prosper Christianity!'"

Had this been the spirit in which the missionaries always acted towards the wizards and witches, Christianity might have continued to prosper in that land; but so pitiless were the representatives of Christianity in their treatment of all that opposed them, and so contrary to the spirit of Christianity was the life of most of the European Christians, that heathenism

triumphed, and the wizards and witches have supplanted the priests.

The latest authority upon the people of these regions, Mr. Monteiro, shows that belief in witchcraft holds with them probably a more mischievous position than in the days of Father Merolla. He says[1]:—"Witchcraft is their principal or only belief; everything that happens has been brought about by it; all cases of drought, sickness, death, blight, accident, and even the most trivial circumstances, are ascribed to the evil influence of witchery or fetish.

"A fetish-man is consulted, and some poor unfortunate accused, and either killed at once or sold into slavery, and in most cases all his family as well, and every scrap of their property confiscated and divided among the whole town; in other cases, however, a heavy fine is imposed, and inability to pay it also entails slavery; the option of trial by ordeal is sometimes afforded the accused, who often eagerly demand it.

"This extremely curious and interesting ordeal is by poison, which is prepared from the bark of a large tree, the *Erythroplœum Guineense*. It either acts as an emetic or as a purgative. Should the former effect take place, the accused is declared innocent; if the latter, he is at once considered guilty, and either allowed to die of the poison, which is said to be quick in its action, or immediately attacked with sticks and clubs, his head cut off, and his body burnt.

"It is said to be in the power of the 'fetish'-man

[1] "Angolo and the River Congo."

to prepare the mixture in such a manner as to determine which of the effects mentioned shall be produced; and I have very little doubt that, as he is bribed or not, so he can and does prepare it. The occasion of the test is one of great excitement, and is accompanied by much cruelty. In some tribes the accused, after drinking the potion, has to stoop and pass under half a dozen low arches made by bending switches, both ends into the ground; should he fall down in passing under any of the arches, that circumstance alone is sufficient to prove him guilty, without waiting for the purgative effect to be produced.

"Before the trial, the accused is confined in a hut, and the night before it is surrounded by all the women and children of the neighbouring towns, dancing and singing to the horrid din of their drums and rattles. On the occasion of the ordeal the men are all armed with knives, hatchets, and sticks, and the moment the poor devil stumbles in going under one of the switches he is instantly set upon by the howling multitude and beaten to death, and cut and hacked to pieces in a few minutes. I was at Mangue Grande on one occasion when a big dance was going on the night before a poor wretch was to take the poison. I went to the town with some of the traders of that place, and we offered to ransom him, but to no purpose; nothing, they said, could save him from the trial. I learnt, however, that he passed it successfully; but I think I never heard such a hideous yelling as the 400 or 500 women and children were making round the hut, almost all with their faces and

bodies painted red and white, dancing in a perfect cloud of dust, and the whole scene illuminated by blazing fires of dry grass under a starlit summer sky!"

In Northern Guinea the practice of witchcraft is common to all the tribes, save the Dahoman, that retain any semblance of heathenism, and it is not uncommon to those who have been brought more or less under the influence of Christianity and Mohammedanism. But little change has taken place in the practice of this art since Barbot visited Northern Guinea more than one hundred years ago, though the punishment of those who have been accused and found guilty of it would seem to be more brutal.

Of the general feeling regarding witchcraft in North Guinea, Barbot says:—"They have a great opinion of witchcraft, and pretend by it to be able to do any mischief they think fit to their enemies, even to taking their lives, as also to discover all secrets, and find out hidden things, or to compel a thief to appear and to restore what he hath stolen, be he ever so remote."

Of the wizards and witches who are not supposed to exercise their craft for malignant purposes, he says:—"Some tell things past and to come by magical figures; others fill an earthen vessel with water and cast into it a drop of oil, which becomes clear and bright, wherein they pretend to see swarms of devils moving in order of battle, some by land and others by water. As soon as these devils have halted, they put the question in hand to them, which they answer by motions of the head and eyes.

"The witches make the people believe that they

converse very familiarly with devils, some of which are white, others red, and others black. When they are forced to foretell anything they smoke themselves with brimstone and other stinking ingredients; which done, they are immediately seized by their familiars, and alter their voices as if these demons spoke through their organs. Then those who consult them draw near, and in a very humble manner put the questions they desire should be answered, and when that is done, withdraw, leaving a present for the witch."

Such proceedings are common nowadays, not only in North Guinea, but throughout Africa.

In Ashango-land, according to M. Du Chaillu, and amongst the Shekiani, the fear engendered by witchcraft leads frequently to deeds of cruelty that are scarcely credible. He gives an account of the death of an old man who was accused of having bewitched and caused the death of another man. The traveller interceded for his life with the chief, who was not unwilling to save him, but the people were worked up into a frenzy of excitement against him by the witch-doctor, and declared that he was a most malignant wizard, who had killed many people, was disposed to kill many more, and that he must die. So they tied the poor creature to the stump of a tree near the bank of a river, and with axes, knives, and cutlasses, hacked him to pieces. They finished their work of vengeance by splitting open his skull, and scattering the brains in the water. Then they returned to the village, and by their joyful exclamations it was evident that they thought they had

delivered the country from a great curse. In the course of a very few hours all excitement had ceased, the infuriated men who had taken part in this horrible tragedy were quietly enjoying the evening meal with their families, and as cheerful as though they had never imbrued their hands in the blood of a fellow-creature.

Mr. C. Reade, in his "Savage Africa," gives another example of the cruelty which is inspired by the fear of this accursed art:—

The head man of a village was taken ill, and a woman was accused of having caused his illness by witchcraft. She at first declared herself to be innocent of this crime, but on being flogged, confessed that she was guilty, and also said that her child, a boy of seven, was her accomplice. Consequently, the mother was taken out to sea in a canoe, brained with an axe, and then thrown overboard, and the child was burnt alive.

The Ashantees have a terrible belief in witchcraft in all its forms, and amongst them executions of certain sorts of wizards and witches are almost of daily occurrence.

Belief in witchcraft necessitates, or at all events has given rise to, ordeals. That of the poisoned water, to which I have frequently alluded, is most commonly used, but there are many others to which people who have been accused of witchcraft, or of other crimes detected by professional witch-doctors, and such-like persons, submit, some of which are not unlike those that existed amongst ourselves.

In some regions great personages may claim the

ordeal of immersion in water. The accused is thrown into a river, which, for the occasion, is supposed to possess supernatural qualities, to have the property of supporting innocent persons, and wafting them gently ashore, even though they have no knowledge of the art of swimming, and of causing guilty persons to sink, though they be skilful swimmers. Elsewhere the following are frequently resorted to.

A cock's feather is thrust into the tongue of the accused; if it pass through easily, he is accounted innocent, and the wound it is said will soon close up and heal without pain; but if there be difficulty in forcing the quill through the tongue, he is accounted guilty.

A red-hot wire or copper ring is drawn three times over the tongue of the supposed guilty person; if it do not burn him, he is aquitted of the crime laid to his charge; if it do, his guilt is thought to be proved beyond all question.

The juice of certain plants is spurted into the eyes of the accused; if unhurt by it, he is absolved; but if it cause his eyes to turn red and inflames them, he is dealt with as convicted.

A stone is thrown into a pot of boiling water; they who take it out with the naked hand without being scalded are supposed innocent, but being scalded declares their guilt.

Several snail-shells are clapped to the accused person's temples, when, if they stick, he is condemned; but if not, discharged.

There are other, and, probably, many other ordeals connected with witchcraft, but those I have mentioned

will serve to show the general character of such final tests of innocence or guilt.

Rain-making is a popular function of the witch-doctors in districts where seasons of drought are not unusual; but the art is not practised where, as in equatorial Africa, there is generally an abundance of rain. Should rain fall within twenty-four hours after the incantations of the adept, he is loaded with gifts, and becomes the object of peculiar honours. Should his charms fail, unless he can succeed in making the people believe that some one has bewitched the clouds, he is treated with contempt, and sometimes hardly dealt with. If his accusation of witchcraft against the clouds be accepted, the fury of the people against those who are convicted of this crime finds a terrible expression. These remarks apply to the Kaffir districts, where much distress is often experienced from drought. Elsewhere in Africa there are many superstitions connected with drought where droughts are frequent, and generally the observances connected therewith recognize the agency of a supernatural power, and are intended to meet and overcome the evil influence which keeps the rain away.

CHAPTER V.

CONCERNING FETISHISM.

COMPREHENSIVELY employed, *Fetish* signifies any material substance in which supernatural power is supposed to be concentrated. Fetishism, therefore, is the worship or the use of such spiritualized substances which are regarded as a protection from all the evils of witchcraft, and a security from every sort of danger, disease, and misfortune.

Human agency is not absolutely necessary to the making of fetish, for any object of which an African dreams, if his dream invest it with supernatural power, is regarded as fetish; but generally fetish is made by wizards and witches, benevolent as well as malevolent, who through their intercourse with the spiritual world are thought to have the power of imparting to any material substance, no matter what, supernatural qualities.

Fetishism is frequently supposed to represent the lowest phase of religious superstition; but Baring Gould says:—"There is nothing necessarily superstitious in fetishism, for it is merely the religious application of an observable general law—the law (1) that forces act from centres, and (2) that objects may possess values not physically appreciable. The prin-

ciple of fetishism is that of centralization, and also of attribution of fictitious value to some object of no demonstrable importance. Thus it underlies a series of religious acts, commercial speculations, and political systems. In religion every temple, and shrine, and priest is a recognition of fetishism; a recognition that certain spots and certain persons are more sacred than other spots and persons. The Christian, who takes off his hat on entering church, and bows at the sacred name in the Creed; the soldier, who presents arms at the royal standard; the sailor, who touches his cap to the quarter-deck; the minister, who bows to the throne, &c., are fetishists as truly as the negro; but they differ from the negro in this, that their belief is not fetishism only, but fetishism plus a number of other *isms*."[1]

Of late years fetishism has been so frequently connected with the Africans, that many have come to think that it is confined to them, whereas men of every race and in every age have been fetishists, have sought, that is, to connect supernatural agencies with physical objects, in order that such agencies might be localized, and brought more directly under the cognizance of the senses.

This would seem to indicate that there is in man, as man, a sense of need, a yearning for a closer connection between the human and the superhuman than his mere natural condition affords, and which can only be truly met by the sacraments of the Church; for where these ordinances of God are unknown, they

[1] "Origin and Development of Religious Belief," p. 175.

are parodied by men to whom it is thought that spiritual powers, for good or for evil, have been delegated, and charms and amulets, and such-like things, which are comprehensively known as fetish, are regarded as channels of supernatural aid.

The history of the religious systems of the world shows that the principle of what is commonly called sacerdotalism is seemingly bound up with human nature, for it is found to be present in one form or another amongst all people, and in every part of the world.

This is a fact which missionaries to the heathen should not lose sight of, for, rightly used, it might enable their converts to realize the true nature and value of the Christian priesthood.

Fetishism, in Africa, is co-extensive with witchcraft, and is so closely allied with it that many would seem to have found it difficult to distinguish between them. They stand, however, to each other in the relation of cause and effect, a distinction which justifies the treating of them as separate subjects.

The purposes to which fetishes are put are almost innumerable. Their primary object is, of course, to guard their possessors from the evils of witchcraft, whatever may be the guise under which such evils approach them.

Diseases of the body being almost invariably attributed to witchcraft, men and women are sometimes literally encumbered with fetishes; some of which are for the head, others for the neck, others for the heart, the arms, the stomach, the back, the loins, and the legs; indeed, every part of the human body

has its appropriate fetish, or charm against the ills which are thought to beset it. I have a large stock of such charms, which, during my residence in Africa, I bought at various times from the people who wore them. Such fetishes are generally simple things; the reeds of certain plants, the roots of certain trees, the horns of a diminutive deer, the claws and teeth of lions and leopards, and other sorts of animals; slips of wood fantastically notched, knuckle-bones, beads, and a kind of white stone, being most commonly used. Amongst the Kaffirs, whose belief in witchcraft is intense, faith in the virtues of fetishes is, as a natural consequence, equally great. You rarely meet with a Kaffir who does not carry with him a whole series of charms. These, of course, are furnished by the witch-doctors and prophets, and as they are not of the least intrinsic value, and are highly paid for, the business of making fetish is a profitable one. To a European a superstitious Kaffir has a very ludicrous appearance, as the following description of a man who seems to have been peculiarly impressible to the value of fetish will show. His head was bedecked with pigs' bristles set straight, so as to stand out on all sides like the quills of a hedgehog, while around his neck there was strung a great number of charms, the principal of which were pieces of bone, the head of a snake, the tooth of a young hippopotamus, and a brass door-handle.

One powerful set of charms is intended for securing the wearer against the feeling of fear, and there is a charm for every kind of fear. For example, if a

Kaffir goes out at night, and is afraid of meeting ghosts, he has recourse to his ghost fetish, which he nibbles slightly (such charms as are made of roots and bits of wood are nibbled when the wearer feels need of their influence), and then ventures out in bold defiance of his spiritual enemies. Again, when going into action as a soldier, a man will be sure to have his enemy-charm ready for use, and just before he enters battle he bites off a portion of the wood, masticates it, and then blows the fragments towards the foe, with the view of taking away the courage of his enemy, and increasing his own. The enemy naturally does the same, and so neither can be sure, until after the event, which has the more potent charm.

Very few Kaffirs—and this I believe holds true of Africans generally—will venture out during the stormy season without a thunder-charm as a preservative against lightning. Faith in this class of fetish is unbounded, and in Kaffraria, in consequence of the frequency and severity of the thunderstorms, they fetch very high prices. Of course, if a man be killed by lightning, or suffers from any other evil while protected by a suitable fetish, the witch-doctor who provided it will find some reason why the charm failed. The charms fail often enough, yet I have no doubt whatever that the faith of the Africans in these fetishes as a protection from the various evils to which they are exposed, and a remedy for certain forms of disease, is real. But though this be true, the presence of a European doctor, be it said, serves to lessen their faith in fetish as a medicinal agent;

for belief in the white man's medicine is certainly greater than their faith in the black medicine-man's charms.

I once saw a man—he was the chief of a village in which, for the moment, I was staying — with a section of a root of some sort fastened to each ankle. Upon inquiry, I found it was a fetish against snake-bites. I laughed at such a protection; and was immediately told by the possessor of it that if I would give him my medicine for snake-bites he would no longer wear it. The fetish of his country he declared to be good, but the medicine of the white man was better. Generally, however, they would cling to their own charms, even when taking our medicine, for fear that some harm might come to them if they were discarded, and a slight be thus put upon the supernatural power with which they were supposed to be invested.

Fetishes against, or for the cure of sickness, are not always worn about the person. They are sometimes found at the entrances of a village, over the doorways of the huts, and near to where the sleeping mat is laid in the hut. Besides these, there are fetishes which restore to health those that are sick, which are the property of the medicine-men, and are sometimes found, as in Angola, in the forms of idols, *i.e.* small, rudely carved figures of man or beast. Such are carried to the residence of the sick person, and at the special invocation of the medicine-man are supposed to become the shrine of a spiritual power that can heal the sick. When the occasion for which this power is invoked is past, its presence is withdrawn,

but the idol is nevertheless regarded with reverential awe, as having been in-dwelt by a supernatural agency.

There are fetishes also which are highly valued, because they are thought to minister to sensual delights, to excite love in those who are not favourably disposed to you, and to cause robberies and every other sort of crime to prosper. Others are thought to have a special value in keeping off evil spirits. Barbot says on this :—"Blacks generally set apart some small quantity of such victuals as they eat, for their fetishes, or, as some will have it, for the devil, whom they call *gune*, to oblige him to be kind to them; for if we believe their own assertions, he often beats them. I remember a black, from whose neck I once pulled away a *grigri*, or spell, made a hideous noise about it, telling us that *gune* had beaten him most unmercifully the next night; and that unless I would, in compassion, give him a bottle of brandy to treat *gune*, and be reconciled to him, for having suffered me to take away his *grigri*, he was confident he should be infallibly killed by him. The fellow was so confident in his conceit, and roared in such a horrible manner for it, that I was forced to humour him for peace and quietness."

The use of fetish as a protection from the molestations of malignant spirits is common throughout Africa. The Africans generally are not destitute of natural courage, yet, until emancipated from their superstitious fears, it is very rarely that they will engage in war, or any other dangerous enterprise, without fortifying themselves with fetishes that are specially qualified to preserve them on such occasions

from harm. Thus protected, however, they will frequently exhibit a courage amounting to audacity; but should they lose their fetishes, or become impressed with the idea that the charms possessed by their enemies are more powerful than their own, they become the greatest cowards.

I once met with an example of the cowardice engendered by this impression that the enemy was possessed of superior fetish. The Manganja and the Ajawa tribes were at war with one another, and the former were invariably defeated; indeed, after the first two or three encounters, they never stayed to receive the attack of their adversaries, but retreated as soon as they caught sight of them, or heard of their near approach. I was at the village of the supreme chief of the Manganja, in company with Mr. Dickinson, the medical officer of the Universities' Mission. The chief, according to custom, paid us a visit. Some people sought Dickinson's assistance as a doctor, and he went off to see them. Said the chief, pointing to my friend as he was leaving us :—

"Is that your *sinanga?*" (medicine-man).

"Yes, he is our *sinanga,*" said I, forgetting for the moment that the *sinanga* of the natives was a man to whom was ascribed supernatural powers.

Upon which he put his arm round my neck, and looking as amiable as he could, said: "Ask him to give me your war-medicine" (*i.e.* fetish).

I laughed, and told him that our medicines were for the cure of sickness only, and that they were not fetish, and that we had no war-medicine but a brave heart. Upon which he became indignant, evidently

thinking I was deceiving him, and said : "Why speak to me thus? Why treat me as though I was a child still at my mother's back, as though age had not made my forehead hard? You talk to me of a brave heart! What is the use of a brave heart when your enemy has stronger war-medicine than you have? I have a brave heart. All my people have brave hearts. But brave hearts are of no use to us; for when we go out to fight the Ajawa, directly we catch sight of them we run away; not, however, because we have not brave hearts, but because they have stronger war-medicine than we have. Now when you go against the Ajawa, they run away. If they only hear that you are coming they run away. Why is that? not because they have not brave hearts, but because you have stronger war-medicine than they. Now don't be an ungenerous man, but ask your *sinanga* to give me your war-medicine, and then the Ajawa will run away out of my country."

I am sure that I did not succeed in convincing this man that we had no war-medicine, for we parted without cordiality on his part. We professed to be his friends, and yet we withheld from him the only thing that would enable him to defeat his enemies. That was his view of the question, and I do not wonder that he felt aggrieved.

When hard pressed in war, and in danger of being utterly overthrown, in some parts of Africa, the people, like the king of Moab, who sacrificed the son of the king of Edom when the battle was against him, in order to move the compassion of his adversaries, or to inspire them with terror, will make horrible

fetishes of human beings. The most astounding instance of such a practice that I have met with occurred in West Africa. The king of Bonny having been defeated in battle, retreated to his principal town, and finding that it was in imminent danger of being attacked, called together his magicians in order that they might aid him in repelling his enemies. They were equal to the emergency. The people were assembled in front of the principal gate of the town. Two holes were dug in the ground close to each other. The wizards then began their operations, and when the people had been wrought up by their proceedings to a pitch of unreasoning excitement, so that they were ready to perpetrate any act, no matter how horrible, the chief of the wizards pointed to a girl who was standing amongst the spectators. She was instantly seized, and, under his direction, her legs were thrust into the holes that had been prepared for this purpose, which were then filled up with earth so that she could not extricate herself from them. Then a number of men brought lumps of wet clay, which they built around her body in the form of a pillar, kneading them closely as they proceeded, until she was entirely covered over. This device produced the desired effect, for so terrified were the hostile tribes at what they regarded as an invincible fetish,—or gregree, as fetish is called in West Africa,—that they dared not attack the town, and, like the kings of Israel and Judah, after the sacrifice of the king of Edom's son, they withdrew from the further prosecution of the war, and returned to their homes.

The clay pillar, with the body of the girl within it,

stood for several years where it had been erected, and served effectually to preserve the town from being again attacked by its enemies.

In Western Africa the natives erect gregrees, though not always of a character so revolting as that just mentioned, on every imaginable occasion, and with the view of warding off every possible calamity. Yet, though so well protected, they are in perpetual fear of the dangers against which they strive to secure themselves, for so many counteracting influences may be at work that it is not for long that they feel their safety to be assured.

Absolute faith in the virtue of the fetish is indispensable to the receiving of its aid; to doubt its potency is to lose the benefit of its power. So say the fetish-men. For instance,—on one occasion a party of natives, before crossing a river on a stormy day, bought of a wizard a fetish against accidents. The canoe was upset, nevertheless, and some of the party were drowned. The survivors went to the wizard and upbraided him with being the cause of the death of their friends, inasmuch as without the protection of a fetish they would not have attempted to cross the river, and he had encouraged them to make the passage by selling them a charm that was valueless. He listened patiently to their reproaches, then questioned them as to their doings, and having gained from their accounts what he had sought for, informed them that the misfortune was caused by the incredulity of the steersman, who tried to sound the river with his paddle in order to discover whether they were in shallow water. This action indicated

mistrust of the gregree, and so the power of the spell was broken.

Fetishes are abundantly used in the fields to protect the crops from being stolen by men, or from being injured by birds and beasts. The Banyai, for instance, guard their honey, which is sometimes found in the hollow of trees, and sometimes preserved in hives which are made of bark, among the branches of trees, by tying round the tree wherein the honey is a palm leaf that has been anointed with some greasy compound, and decorated with tufts of grass, feathers, &c. They firmly believe that if a thief were to climb over this fetish, or to remove it, he would surely be afflicted with illness and speedily die.

Elsewhere I have seen cornfields similarly protected. Strips of bark joined together, and specially connected with spiritualized substances, are carried round the whole field, and woe be to the man or beast that breaks down this charmed barrier.

The Bechuana are much given to put their trust in this sort of fetish as a protection of the fruits of their fields from birds and beasts, lightning, and storms of rain, or whatever is likely to injure them.

Hunters generally value fetishes highly as calculated to give them success in their operations. Some tribes think that every animal is affected by an appropriate fetish. This belief has given rise to a race of medicine-men who are regarded as special professionals—one taking as his specialty the preparation of elephant fetish, without which no hunter will go after the elephant; another prepares fetish for the buffalo; another for the hippopotamus, and so on.

Since the introduction of firearms into Africa, fetish to make guns shoot straight is eagerly sought for. The superior skill of Europeans in the use of the gun is supposed to be owing to the possession of the necessary sort of fetish; a supposition which has been strengthened by Europeans themselves, who frequently impose upon the natives by telling them that they have "gun-medicine" which enables them to do great things.

When furnished with special charms against certain animals, the Africans are sometimes reckless in their daring. When coming down the Shire River, one of my boatmen said he had no fear of crocodiles, as he had "crocodile-medicine," which protected him, and made them afraid. I expressed my disbelief in the efficacy of his fetish, when, to prove that he had said no more of its virtues than he was warranted in doing, he jumped overboard, swam to a sand island on which basked a large crocodile, and, walking close up to the creature, stamped his foot in its very face, and defied it to do him any mischief. The brute snapped its jaws and lashed its tail angrily, but instead of making at the man, as I fully expected to see it do, retreated into the water. The man, after dancing about the island in triumph, returned to the boat, and was much disappointed to find that I did not think he owed his safety to his fetish. I forced him to admit that fetish did not always afford a protection against danger. I could not, however, make him or his companions believe that I and my colleagues were not protected by fetish. They were far too polite to say that they did not believe me, but

they received my assurances with the remark, "We hear"; and with a look of incredulity which they could not suppress. To them it was evidently incredible that we could do as we did unless fortified by supernatural powers; and as the only supernatural aid of which they had any knowledge was found in witchcraft and fetish, they credited us with the possession of both, and of a character and potency far superior to that which they themselves possessed.

Where books are not known, and where there is no notion of the art of writing, when these are first brought to the knowledge of the Africans, they almost invariably regard them as connected with fetish. Indeed, in Western Africa, amongst the tribes that have become Mohammedans, or live in the neighbourhood of such, the gregree, or charms, generally consist of passages from the Koran written on strips of paper and sewed up in little leathern bags. It is thought that such charms have many occult virtues to preserve the persons by whom they are worn from any misfortune. These gregrees are divided into classes, each class having its peculiar use; some to guard their possessors from being cast away when they are fishing, and to save them from being wounded, killed, or enslaved in war, or when on a journey; others to secure them against lightning; others to preserve women in childbed; others to enable them to get many wives, or much wealth; and they are fitted to all other purposes indeed which are connected with the experience of their life. Indeed these sorts of fetish are supposed to possess all the characteristics of those to which I have

referred as existing amongst the unsophisticated heathen; the same sort of confidence is placed in them, and their owners, trusting to the protection which they believe them to afford, will boldly expose themselves to dangers from which they would otherwise shrink.

These gregrees are thought to have been introduced into these parts of Africa by a sect of Mohammedans called Calendars, who lived in religious societies or monasteries, and who are said to have maintained amongst themselves a sort of cabalistical learning or art of magic. These charms are words from the Koran, in imitation of the Jewish phylacteries, and are supplied to the African converts to Mohammedanism as a substitute for the native gregrees, and a profit to the vendors.

Barbot says of the people of Northern Guinea, in reference to their fondness of gregrees:—"Whatsoever was the original of these gregrees, that stupid, ignorant people will willingly part with anything they have, to be furnished with as many as they are able to purchase, according to their quality and possession; and take a great pride in them. Some will give two or three slaves for one gregree; others two, three, or four oxen, answerable to the virtues or qualities assigned to it. I was told that Conde, king Damel's viceroy, constantly wore to the value of fifty slaves in these gregrees about his body; and so every other person of note proportionally; for not only their caps and waistcoats, but their very horses are covered with them in the army, to prevent their being wounded. To say the truth, some of the principal

blacks are so well furnished all over with gregrees in every part of their bodies, under their shirts and bonnets, that they cannot well be wounded with any assegai or javelin; nay they often stand in need of being helped to mount their horses, which are also adorned with the same, to render them more sprightly and prevent their being hurt."

Major Denham gives an amusing instance of the superstitious feeling with which these literary gregrees are regarded by the unsophisticated natives.

El Kanemy, the Sheikh of Bornu, had been annoyed on many occasions by the incursions of the Mungas, a formidable tribe of heathens. He collected his forces, and threatened to exterminate them, but, before proceeding to do this by force of arms, he invited them to satisfy themselves that he was able to fulfil his threat; and finding that, when he arranged his troops before them, they did not fear, he endeavoured, and successfully endeavoured, to make them afraid of him by copying out a great number of charmed sentences for gregrees. This the Mungas regarded as a proof of supernatural power, and they agreed that it would be useless to fight against a man who by his magical arts could make charms, and who consequently could blunt their arrows, snap their spears asunder, and cause them to become ill with unnatural terror. So they made peace with El Kanemy upon his own terms.

There has not been much change in the opinions of the natives of North Guinea with regard to this kind of gregree since Barbot and Denham's time.

The Mandingoes still hold them in such high

esteem that a wealthy man is sometimes clothed from head to foot in a cuirass made of nothing but these amulets sewn up in their neat leathern cases.

Amongst the Manganja and other tribes the superstitious feeling which they had regarding books and the art of writing would have made it easy for me and my companions to have persuaded them to accept scraps of paper on which we had written, or leaves of books, as fetishes. I was one day writing outside my hut, when a woman, who had come with her two boys from a long distance to see the white men, sat down a little distance from me and watched me with a sort of fearful curiosity. At length she mustered courage enough to ask me what I was doing. I told her that I was putting on to the paper a full description of herself and boys, her name, their names, and all that I knew about her, for the information of my own people, who lived 'many moons' away, and that they, by looking at the marks I had made on the white sheet of paper, would know how she was dressed, what ornaments she wore, and all that she had told me about herself and her people. Upon hearing this she looked terror-stricken, and she shrunk from me, muttering *mankwara* (fetish). A sheet of paper was blown from my writing-case, I motioned to one of her boys to bring it to me, but she laid hold of him in evident alarm for his safety, and told him not to touch it, as some evil might come to him if he did.

Of course it was not long before we succeeded in disabusing the people about us, of their erroneous ideas respecting books and writing, but it would have

been easy to have used their ignorance in the same way that the Mohammedans have done in Western Africa.

The amulets of the Mohammedans, however, have not altogether destroyed faith in the old native gregrees, and when a Mandingo chief, for instance, dies, the place of his sepulture is kept secret, for fear the body should be disturbed; and the blade-bone, and certain other parts that are thought to be suitable to such a purpose, taken away and used as fetish. There is no fetish that so surely fortifies its possessor against injury from witchcraft or any other cause as that which is made out of some portion of the body of a man or a woman who had achieved greatness in life, or who was thought to have possessed supernatural powers. This holds true in every part of Africa.

By the Manganja, and some other tribes in their neighbourhood, I and my companions, as I have said, were regarded as the possessors of supernatural powers greater than those possessed by any native. Some of my companions died, and I have no doubt that on one occasion, at least, a grave was disturbed that some portion, the skull probably, of the dead body enclosed therein might be secured as fetish. These tribes invariably associated personal bravery with the possession of fetish, or with supernatural powers, which were identified with the mere body of the individual who exhibited it; and I knew of one well-authenticated instance where they cut into the smallest pieces the body of a man who, as their enemy, had shown great courage, and distributed

them amongst their own fighting men, in order that they might become as brave as he.

In Ashantee, and some neighbouring regions, the employment of fetish is general, and is frequently attended with horrible observances.

Dupuis says[1]:—"When the king was about to open the campaign against Gaman he collected together his priests to invoke the royal fetish, and perform the necessary orgies to insure success. These ministers of superstition sacrificed thirty-two male and eighteen female victims, as an expiatory offering to the gods; but the answers of the priests being deemed by the council as still devoid of inspiration, the king was induced *to make a custom* at the sepulchres of his ancestors, where many hundreds bled. This, it is affirmed, propitiated the wrath of the adverse gods. The priests then prepared a certain fetish compound, which they delivered to the king, with an injunction to burn the composition daily in a consecrated fire-pot within the palace, and upon no account to neglect the fire so as to suffer it to go out; for as long as the sacred flame devoured the powder he would triumph over his foes. When the king joined his army he commissioned his eldest sister (then governess of the kingdom) to attend strictly to the sacred mystery, telling her that his crown and life both depended upon her vigilance and the fulfilment of his order. He selected also three wives, to whom he was more attached than the rest, in conjunction with his last-mentioned sister.

[1] "Residence in Ashantee," pp. 114, 115.

During his absence this arbitress of his fate formed a connection with a chief of Bourmay, whose ambition suggested a plan to seat himself upon the throne. In this conspiracy seventeen of the king's wives and their families joined; *the fire-pot was broken to pieces*, and the chief commenced arming his party. But the king, who had sustained heavy losses in the early part of the war, and was unable to account for the audacity of the enemy, performed an incantation over a certain talisman, which gave an insight into what was transacting at the capital."

He, therefore, took prompt measures to crush the rebellion, and all those who shared in it were destroyed.

Bowditch states that the hearts of the fallen enemies of the Ashantees are cut out by the priests, and the blood and small pieces being mixed (with much ceremony and incantation) with various consecrated herbs, are eaten by the younger soldiers in order to prevent their vigour and courage being secretly wasted by the haunting of the spirits of the slain.

Lander relates that, "In the private fetish hut of the king of Adilee, at Badagry, the skull of that monarch's father is preserved in a clay vessel, placed in the earth. Human blood, as well as the blood of birds and beasts, is occasionally sprinkled on it, and when the king goes to war, the same skull is invariably carried with him, with which he frequently converses, and gently rebukes if his success does not answer to his expectations."

Badagry is contiguous to Dahomey, which is a

horrible Golgotha, for human skulls, used as fetish, garnish every town and village, and probably every hut in the country.

There are other features of fetishism in Africa not unlike those which have prevailed in other lands, not excluding our own. It is common to them to make images which are struck with darts, or slowly burned, in order to injure the person they are made to represent. Sir John Lubbock remarks, "A mysterious connection is supposed to exist between a cut lock of hair and the person to whom it belonged. In various parts of the world the sorcerer gets clippings of the hair of his enemy, parings of his nails, or leavings of his food, convinced that whatever evil is done to these will react on their former owner. Even a piece of clothing, or the ground on which a person has trodden, will answer the purpose, and among some tribes the mere knowledge of a person's name is supposed to give a mysterious power." [1]

Many particulars answering to this statement might be given in illustration of fetishism in Africa, but I think that the examples thus produced are sufficient to give a general idea of the character and effects of this belief.

More than this I have not aimed at in this brief exposition of the Religion of the Africans; yet I feel persuaded that I have indicated the main features of their religious beliefs, and that every custom and ceremony of religious importance amongst them, can be referred to one or the other of the divisions which I have made.

[1] "Prehistoric Times," p. 471.

APPENDIX.

THERE are some other features of the religious beliefs of the Africans which find expression in certain customs of wide-spread and most ancient usage, which may properly receive some notice in an appendix. They are :—

1. *Circumcision.*—There is in Africa an almost general belief in the need of circumcision, and the great majority of the tribes practise it. This rite did not, as some seem to suppose, come in with the Mohammedans; it was practised before they, as a religious community, had a position in the world, and it is not improbable that it is derived from a period even anterior to that when the observance was by a divine command enforced upon Abraham and his descendants. The Africans have no idea of its origin, and conform to it because it is an ancient usage which has been transmitted to them from one generation to another for many ages.

It has been said that amongst them this rite is without religious significance. I am not quite sure that this is the case. Where it is practised it is regarded as a duty, the neglect of which would be a crime, and would expose the criminal to the anger of his own people, and to the displeasure of the spiritual

world, that is, of that portion of the spiritual world which was interested in the affairs of his tribe. The anger of his fellows would entail upon him loss of position, loss of property, and probably loss of life; the displeasure of the spirits, even though he escaped from the jurisdiction of his tribe, would be shown in grievous diseases, and perhaps in madness and death. It is difficult, therefore, to say that no religious significance is associated with the practice of circumcision amongst the heathen Africans, although it entails no moral obligations, and is associated with gross and obscene observances.

In some parts of Southern Guinea, children are circumcised at the age of six months, but generally the operation is deferred until the period of puberty.

The necessity of undergoing some rite when emerging from childhood is not restricted to boys, it is incumbent on girls also.

The preparations for this rite amongst the Zulu and Kaffir tribes is most severe. The candidates are separated from their parents, and placed under the appointed instructors, whose schools of discipline are at some distance from the villages. For several weeks they are treated with utmost rigour. They are whipped severely, that they may learn to bear pain without showing emotion; they are made to go without food for long periods together, that they may be capable of enduring hunger; and, in short, they are exposed to all the trials of courage and endurance which only the experience of life common to a Zulu could have suggested.

After the crowning ceremony, which is performed

in secret, the boys are permitted a period of unchecked indulgence; they do no work; they eat and drink, sleep and play, just as their fancy dictates, and with the good will of the whole community. But when this relaxation is over, they gradually begin to assume the position and duties of men.

The ceremonies attendant upon the observance of this custom vary in their character with the position and character of the different tribes; but whenever it is deferred beyond the age of infancy it is made the occasion of a discipline intended to prepare the candidates for the hardships of life; and it is also used as a fitting opportunity for making them aware of the carnal gratifications that are in store for them.

Where the tribes are not warlike, and shrink from the infliction of pain, the discipline loses much of its severity, but the ceremonies which have for their object the exaltation of the pleasures of sensuality are more pronounced. This was undoubtedly the case with the Manganja. They did not practise circumcision, though surrounded by tribes that did, yet their young people of a certain age had to submit to the *Niamwali*, which was their substitute for circumcision, the ceremonial of which was grossly obscene. The most revolting features of the ancient phallic-worship were produced, and songs and dances were equally objectionable.

The effect of the Niamwali upon those who submitted to it was the destruction of the light-hearted, simple-minded, state of existence which under favourable circumstances characterizes children in Africa,

and a knowledge of evil which influenced for harm their whole course of life.

II. Observances connected with uncleanness.—In some respects these observances approximate to the Levitical laws on uncleanness; in others they are very unlike them. They are like in the fact that certain states of life, appertaining to women, are regarded as unclean; but they are unlike, in that they are destitute of all ritualistic acts, which have for their object the inculcation of bodily holiness, the enforcement of the solemn precept, "Ye shall be holy, for I am holy." But though no moral significance be associated with them, the African observances are strictly enforced, and a terrible punishment will speedily follow any departure from them, that is, amongst such people as the Zulus and Ashantees.

The defilement supposed to be caused by the birth of a child lasts so long a time amongst some of the tribes, that the men use it as an argument in favour of polygamy.

III. Method used for the discovery of adultery.—This, in some parts of Africa, answers to the trial by the waters of jealousy amongst the Jews. The accused person has to drink a large draught of liquor prepared for the purpose, and if guilty, effects similar to those which followed the administration of the waters of jealousy amongst the Jews are supposed to follow. But should not the adulterous woman actually die from the effects of the draught, she is put to death, that is, if her husband insists upon the infliction of the extreme penalty. Like some other observances amongst the Jews, this custom probably prevailed long

before Moses appropriated it, and there is but little reason to suppose that the Africans derived it, or their ideas concerning physical defilement, from the Jews.

IV. Omens and Divinations.—These form an important element in the life of the Africans. They imagine that everything that exists lives and feels like themselves, and that the unseen spirits that surround and affect them are infinite in their variety and number; consequently they are ever looking for omens, and are continually consulting the diviner for indications of the future. To compile the omens recognized by the Africans, and to give particulars of their methods of divination, would require a volume. Generally, be it said, their omens seem to comprise all that are recognized everywhere else, and their methods of divination are principally based upon the idea that external nature, and the condition of the bodies of certain animals immediately after death, sympathize with and frequently indicate the fortunes of mankind.

V. Vows.—The practice of making vows is very common in Africa. As might be expected, some are of an absurd nature, but many have a religious significance, and comprise voluntary obligations to God, or members of the spiritual world, on the fulfilment of certain conditions; such as deliverance from danger and sickness, safety on a journey, prosperity in life, &c.

Bishop Steers furnishes examples of vows brought under his notice. For instance, a person in Zanzibar vowed to go out from the town to the Muzimu

(spirits) naked, and performed it in the night secretly. Another vowed to go out to the same Muzimu walking on her knees, and a great crowd assembled to see it done.

The bishop also furnishes us with two vows which were given to him as specimens of the usual form used by the Nyamwezi. The first is for a safe journey home, and runs thus :—"O God, give me my vow; give it me, that when I come and arrive at my mother's town, I may come to redeem my vow with a goat." The other is an address to an ancestral spirit, and is for health and wealth .—"O Father, give me health and strength. Let thy children be well. Give me rain, that the corn may flourish; and if I get wealth, I will come and redeem my vow with an ox."

Further examples might be produced, but these will be sufficient for the purpose of showing the nature and character of vows in Africa. There may be other phases of what might properly be termed religious belief; for in Africa, as I have more than once said, it is almost impossible to find any custom that is not prompted or influenced by belief in the presence and power of the spiritual world; but I have mentioned the most important—those, indeed, which really govern all others.

In such I perceive nothing that is calculated to oppose extraordinary obstacles to the progress of Christianity, but much that is calculated to aid it. Christianity is not simply a religion of precepts, but a spiritual-life system, and the religion of the Africans is based upon a belief in the existence and

agency of the spiritual world. Their spiritualism may represent what is called the lowest stage of religious conception, yet in its primary idea of a sympathy between the natural and the supernatural, there are the possibilities of highest spiritual advancement. Faith, and patient perseverance, and a judicious use of all the advantages of human knowledge which we possess, will, under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, assuredly triumph over every difficulty which may present itself in the superstitions of the Africans, until their religious beliefs are freed from all that is false and foul, and their lives are purified by the sanctifying influences of the religion of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

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